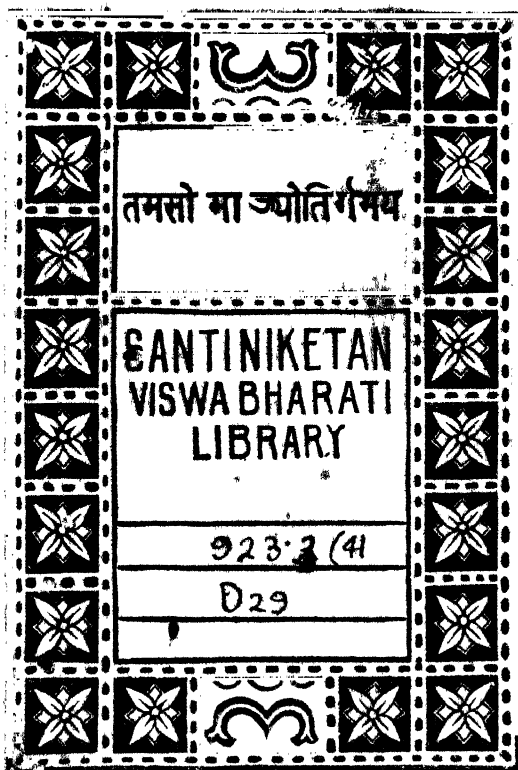


MICHAEL DAVITT

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REVOLUTIONARY, AGITATOR AND LABOUR LEADER

BY

F. SHEEHY-SKEFFINGTON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JUSTIN M'CARTHY

T. FISHER UNWIN

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"THE Land League represented the triumph of what was forgiving over what was revengeful in my Celtic temperament."

"I would not purchase liberty for Ireland at the price of giving one vote against the liberty of the Republics of South Africa."

"Make no mistake about it, my Lord Bishop of Limerick, Democracy is going to rule in these countries."

PREFACE



THIS book is a primer of Davitt—an introduction to the study of his career, not an exhaustive inquiry superseding all others. My twofold object in writing it has been to revivify Davitt's ideas amongst the Irish people, and to spread an appreciation of them amongst the people of Great Britain.

There is need for such a book. For these are days when a great man is forgotten almost before he is buried—unless his greatness consisted in skilled exploitation of his fellow-creatures, in which case his memory will be preserved by costly and ugly monuments. In Ireland I know, and in Great Britain I fear, that it is none too soon to remind the public of the salient lessons of Michael Davitt's career.

With the exception of a few hitherto unpublished letters, and some details from personal observation, the whole of this book is prepared from public sources.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Mrs. Davitt for

having taken pains to make it clear to the public that this is not the "official" Life of Davitt. She cannot be more anxious than I am to have it known that it has been written entirely on my own responsibility, and free from the restrictions in handling his material which are apt to hamper the endeavours of the most zealous official biographer.

That Mrs. Davitt should object to the publication of any sketch of her husband's life other than that to be issued under her own auspices occasions in me neither astonishment nor resentment. Her position is as intelligible as it is indefensible. The giants of reform, of whom Michael Davitt was one, belong not to any single family, but to the world; to discuss the lesson of their lives is a right that cannot be denied to the humblest of their disciples.

F. SHEEHY-SKEFFINGTON.

DUBLIN, *27th October* 1907.

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FAREWELL, great rebel, all the glorious ghosts
Of all who loved and died for Ireland stand
About your sepulchre, an angel band;
The great, whose names are blown about the coasts
Of the world's glory, and the noble hosts
Of nameless martyrs for their Motherland,
Who gave green Erin heart and brain and hand,
The captains and the soldiers at their posts.
Rest, brother, in content, whose mortal eyes
Saw, ere they slept, the triumph half achieved,
And freedom nearer on a flowing tide;
For the long warfare wear the victor's prize—
No lovelier life for Ireland ever lived,
No happier death for Ireland ever died.

JUSTIN HUNTLY M'CARTHY.

31st May 1906.

INTRODUCTION



MICHAEL DAVITT AS I KNEW HIM

MY friendship with Michael Davitt extended over a great many years. Before I came to know him personally I had felt a thorough admiration for him as a patriotic and devoted Irishman, one of those who, while ready to encounter any danger where there was hope of some benefit to be obtained for their country, were yet desirous of obtaining such results by the paths of peace, and had still a strong hope that full justice to Ireland might be found even yet by those long-trodden ways. I did not come to know Mr. Davitt personally until after the Fenian movement had entirely run its course and he had paid many penalties for the share he had taken in its efforts. My companionship with him was therefore entirely in the ways of peace, and he had by that time come to have a firm belief in the possibility of obtaining before long, and with the help of England's awaking sense of justice and recognition of Ireland's genuine

claims, the restoration of the Irish people to the right of national self-government as a willing partner in the Imperial confederation. It is not, however, my intention to devote myself in this paper to any study of the Home Rule question, which is, I fully believe, destined to have before long a final and satisfactory settlement, welcome alike to the enlightenment of all parts of the Empire. My object is to give my ideas of Michael Davitt himself rather than of the part which he played in the political history of his country. There was a natural charm about the man, about his evident sincerity, about the marvellously blended force and gentleness of his character and his manners, expressing themselves even in the very tones of his voice. You could not look into his dark, deep, thoughtful eyes, or observe his sweet and genial smile, without feeling instinctively drawn towards him and becoming conscious at once that, like Abu Ben Adhem, he was "one who loved his fellow-men." Never did I know anyone more entirely unselfish than Michael Davitt; and it is not inconsistent, but strictly consistent, with that description of him to say that he always impressed me as being a man devoted to the work of self-improvement. He was emphatically abstemious in all that concerned what used to be called the pleasures of the table, but he never could

have enough of the food which ministered to the intellectual tastes. He was a lover of books, of music, of pictures, of statues, of scenery, and in the midst of his continuous political work he always seemed able to find time for the reading of books which had nothing to do with political struggles. He was fond of travel, and although his personal means were always very limited, there was not one, I believe, of the world's five great geographical divisions on which he had not set somewhere his wandering feet. He was well acquainted with most of the European countries, and he had made an especially careful study of Russia. I can well remember having had several delightful conversations with him about his observations and experiences in Russia, and having received much valuable, and I hope lasting, instruction from all that he had to tell me and could bring before me with so realistic an effect. He had paid several visits to the United States and Canada, and had been to South America and Australia. His rare and happy gift of making the best of everything could not be more strikingly illustrated than it was by the skill with which he had trained himself to go through the various occupations and movements of his daily life with only one arm and hand—the left arm and hand—to assist him. I have noticed again and again, and with never-lessening wonder and admiration, the

ease with which Davitt seated at a dinner-table could contrive to dispense with any help during the progress of the meal. Davitt was, as my readers all know, an Irish peasant by birth and family, and only removed from Irish soil when under the existing system of land legislation in Ireland his parents were turned out from their cottage home and the patch of land which they had been cultivating. The Davitts then went to Lancashire to seek for employment, and young Michael was only eleven years old when by an accident in a factory he lost his right arm. He had a long period of work still before him, which was spent mainly in the companionship of artisan fellow-workers; and yet those who had only known Davitt as one of the leaders of political public opinion might never have supposed that he did not belong from his birth to what we ordinarily describe as the educated classes. He had in every sense the manners of a gentleman. One coming to know him for the first time might easily have imagined that there was something foreign about him. He had the air of refinement, of graceful ease, and quiet self-reliance always, which we associate with that order of beings to whom Thackeray in one of his ballads declares was decreed "peace on earth"—"to gentle men." I have been often led to think how utterly unlike the

appearance, the bearing, and the manners of Michael Davitt would have seemed to anyone who took his ideas as to the Irish peasant from the living images of such a being brought out frequently for public admiration on the London or the provincial stage. I am not now thinking merely of the presentations of farce, but of the best order of Irish comedy as we see it on the stage. There, even when the Irish Paddy is not meant to be a mere buffoon and is represented by a comedian of artistic capacity, he is almost always exhibited as a creature endowed with irrepressible mirth, who can make a joke out of anything and set us laughing even while he is supposed to be troubled at heart. Now I think any of us who have really known the Irish peasant in his own land cannot but have seen that there is a tone of sadness going through his whole life as there is a tone of sadness in so much of his national music. Michael Davitt always seemed to me to preserve especially this peculiarity of temperament. He had indeed a keen sense of humour and a vein of very delicate irony; he could make a good joke and tell a bright, pleasant story effectively and at the same time easily, just as he could make a powerful speech from the platform or a thrilling appeal in his own defence to the court and the jury on the occasion of some prosecution set up against him by the Government

in power. There you saw the man endowed with a spirit which can create devoted followers for him and for his cause, and there was no tone of melancholy in the outpouring of his spirit. But the more you came to know Michael Davitt the more you became aware of the fact that a spirit of melancholy contemplation suffused his whole temperament. In the same way those who belonging to the outer world were brought into acquaintanceship with him soon saw that this prominent leader of Irish rebellious movements was with his whole heart a lover of peace, and would have been only too happy if he had lived at a time and under conditions when the legislative reforms needed for the prosperity of his country could be accomplished by the mere influence of argument and appeal addressed to the House of Commons. Michael Davitt had in his later years fully recognised the fact that a large and ever-increasing force of enlightened public opinion in Great Britain was coming to understand and to sympathise with the demands made by those who were really the representatives of the Irish cause. We had spoken many times on this subject, and found its illustration in the course taken during recent years by many eminent English public men and by many English newspapers, and it was evident that Davitt had long ceased to regard, if indeed he had ever thus re-

garded, the English people of whatever order as the determined enemies of Ireland's National cause. I can say in all sincerity that the spirit of Michael Davitt would have led him, if only the conditions of English legislation had allowed him such a chance, to be remembered above all things else as an apostle of peace.

Before bringing this Introduction to a close, I feel bound to tell my readers that I cannot identify myself with some of the opinions expressed very strongly in the book by its brilliant author. The writer of an Introduction to another man's work is not indeed usually supposed to identify himself with every opinion which the book may express, but the views which Mr. F. Sheehy-Skeffington sets forth very emphatically as to the position taken up by most of the Irish Catholic Prelates and Clergy against the great National movements are altogether at variance with my own. I am thoroughly convinced, after a very long, varied, and intimate experience of Ireland's political conditions, that the immense majority of the Irish Catholic Prelates and Clergy have always been on the side of every National movement for the foundation of a genuine Irish Parliament and for the restoration of the Irish cultivator to the soil which it has been his work to cultivate.

JUSTIN M'CARTHY.

MICHAEL DAVITT

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

"Our eviction . . . and the privations of the preceding famine years, the story of the starving peasantry of Mayo, of the deaths from hunger, and the coffinless graves on the roadside—everywhere a hole could be dug for the slaves who died because of 'God's Providence'—all this was the political food, seasoned with a mother's tears over unmerited sorrows and sufferings, which had fed my mind in another land, a teaching which lost none of its force or directness by being imparted in the Gaelic tongue" (*Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, ch. xvii.).

MICHAEL DAVITT was born on the 25th of March 1846—the year immediately preceding the Great Famine. His birthplace was the village of Straide, in the heart of the county Mayo. He came of a peasant stock. His father, who was the head of an agrarian secret society in Mayo in his youth, had had to fly the country for a time, in 1837, to escape a threatened prosecution for Ribbonism. Like all Mayo families in the forties, the Davitts were Irish-speaking; and that fluency in the Gaelic tongue, which Michael Davitt retained

till his death, was acquired by him as a lad at his mother's knee.

The horrors of the famine broke over his infancy. The people of the district in the immediate neighbourhood of his birthplace were among the heaviest sufferers by the failure of the potato and the base "morality" of the clergy, who exhorted the starving peasants to go on dutifully paying their rents till they and their families died. It was the famine, in the first instance, that gave Michael Davitt to Ireland. Though he was not old enough to remember the famine year himself, the tales of it were amongst the earliest lessons he learned, in that exile into which landlordism subsequently drove them, from the lips of his father and mother. One story of those ghastly times, in particular, made a strong and lasting impression on his youthful mind. It was the story of how three hundred poor people, who had died of starvation in the vicinity of Straide and Swinford, were thrown, coffinless and pell-mell, into one pit in the corner of the workhouse yard at Swinford. The earth piled upon them, they were left there without funeral service of any kind or any token whatever of respect for the dead. Davitt has left it on record that his mother's graphic account of this horror burnt deep into his soul, and that the recollection of it had a potent influence on his decision to found the Land League in 1879. His reason was to show him later that the fundamental error—nay, crime—of those days was the "inhuman spirit of social suicide" in which the people tamely died

rather than lift a hand to seize the food which in justice belonged to them and their children. His emotions were thus early stimulated to glowing anger by the record of the terrible results of that cowardice. The chain of causation linking the famine to the Land League was already being forged.

Nor was it altogether from the narratives of others that the boy derived his recollections of these fearful years. If too young to remember the famine itself, he was not too young to see its consequences in their most appalling form. The sequel of the Great Famine came in the Great Clearances. Hundreds of thousands of homes were destroyed, and their occupiers driven into exile, that the land might be turned into the huge grazing ranches which still to-day replace tilled soil over much of the best land in Ireland. Davitt's family was one of those to suffer this inhuman eviction. In 1852, when he was not yet six years old, his father and mother, with their helpless children, were thrown out upon the roadside in pursuance of the policy which has turned Straide from a populous village into "a name to mark the place where happy homesteads once stood." The young Michael well remembered in after years that scene by the roadside: the stern anguish of his father, the tears of his mother, the wail and the groan with which they greeted the sight of their little cabin being battered down by the minions of the landlord. He remembered, too, on leaving that spot of tragic memory, going with his mother to the workhouse, where

they were refused admittance because Mrs. Davitt, a high-spirited woman, who had the greater part in making her son the man he was, would not submit to the conditions sought to be imposed upon her in that institution—namely, that her son should be separated from her for purposes of proselytism.

The family left Ireland. In his defence of the Land League before the *Times* Commission, Davitt explains how the deep-rooted feeling of hostility to England and her rule in Ireland was implanted in the minds of Irish-Americans and native Americans by the influence of that never-ending stream of emigrants from the old land, constantly renewing the story of extortion, starvation, and disease. Every evicted family which sought a home in another land, whether that land was America, Australia, or Great Britain itself, was a fresh missionary of the gospel of hatred—hatred of the power that had abetted landlordism in driving them from their homes. Without the support of these Irish exiles in foreign lands, and the generous aid, too, of those non-Irish folk who learned to know and respect the Irish in their exile, the Land League movement could not have attained the success it did. "Poetic justice" (as the world has agreed to name the application of the principle of scientific causality to wrong-doing and its consequences) was never more strikingly exemplified than by the decisive part played in bringing about the fall of Irish feudalism by the victims whom that feudalism had driven apparently far from any possibility of wreaking harm upon their oppressors. And the

crowning instance of retribution lies in the fact that not merely the strength of the movement, but its leader as well, its brain and heart and very life, sprang from among those exiled victims of the Great Clearances.

In Haslingden, in Lancashire, the Davitt family settled. Here, in the midst of surroundings the most typically English in their dominant and soul-crushing industrialism, grew up the man who was destined to effect more for the destruction of English rule in Ireland than any other of the Irish race. Double influences, acting on his boyish mind, engendered the two chief motive powers of his life. At home, under the tuition, as he himself has told us, of his high-minded and patriotic mother, "with an assistant monitor of a father," he learned the lessons of love for Ireland and of stern resolve to do what in him lay to make her free. Outside his home, in the little world of Haslingden manufacturing life, he learned to sympathise with the English toiler, and to appreciate the guiltlessness of the working classes from either deliberate participation in or personal benefit from the English occupation of Ireland. In an oppressed country, the average rebel, and even the average leader, is apt to regard "England" as an indivisible entity —an oppressor naturally such throughout all its parts. Few Irish leaders have had such an opportunity as Michael Davitt had of realising the truth —that in England itself there exists an oppressed class whose participation in the exploitation of Ireland is due only to that ignorance which the

privileged rulers of both peoples have taken care not to dispel. None has ever so well employed that opportunity to grasp this truth and make use of it in the struggle for the democratic rights of Ireland. At school, in the street, in the factory, in various business relations, Davitt learned to know and to understand the English people. Such intercourse, maintained day by day for years, has one of two opposite effects on the average mind. Either it blurs the sentiment of origin and converts the susceptible one into a miserable imitation of an Englishman, an indiscriminate panegyrist of English greatness; or it strengthens native prejudices, and inspires the subject with an unconquerable loathing for the English. Neither assimilation nor unreasoning repulsion was the effect produced on the strong, calm, sane intellect of Michael Davitt. He hated not, but pitied, the wage-slaves of England. He continued to hate, with that burning hatred of wrong which is the outstanding characteristic of the tenderest men, the powers that held both these toilers and his own countrymen in unredeemed subjection.

This double aspect of Davitt's attitude towards the by no means simple entity called "England" is well illustrated by a passage in his famous speech before the *Times* Commission, which, as it expressly relates to his earlier life, may fittingly be quoted in this place:—

"What wonder if Irishmen, who feel themselves equal before God and man to those who have thus

tried to degrade them, should aspire to create that status of national independence for their country which commands respect for every citizen of a self-governed state ? I plead guilty to having had this aspiration from the first time I learned to lisp the name of Dublin Castle, and to hate the system of rule which attempted to lower Ireland to the level of a despised vassalage. And am I to be told this aspiration is criminal ? . . . Why, my Lords, I have spent two-thirds of my life in England. Whatever political education I have managed to pick up on the byways of a rugged life of toil and suffering has been gathered here. The first man after my father whom I ever heard denouncing landlordism, not only in Ireland but in England, was Ernest Jones, who had himself been once imprisoned as an agitator ; the first lesson I ever learned in the doctrine of liberty was from English and not from Irish history. And am I to be told by the *Times* that the spirit of political justice which breathes through the English language ; that the precepts of national independence which are preached to mankind by the Miltons and Shelleys and Byrons, through every page of England's literature ; that the records of effort and of sacrifice which England's history proudly speaks of as the origin and maintenance of England's freedom—am I to be told that all this is meant for England, for Italy, for all the world except for the inhabitants of an island at its very doors ? "

I want thus early to emphasise the international sympathies of the man—his readiness, nay, eagerness, to recognise good anywhere, even in the country he fought. He belonged not only to Ireland, but to the world ; and it was because he

belonged to the world, and looked upon the problems of Ireland with an Irish understanding quickened by a world-wide sympathy, that he was able to effect so much in Ireland and for Ireland.

That period of political education of which Davitt speaks in the above extract was, however, preceded by an education of a different but not less permanently influential kind. The beneficent industrial system insisted that the factory should precede the school as a contributor to Davitt's development. At the age of eleven he entered one of Haslingden's great cotton mills, to add his mite to the support of the impoverished and struggling family. It seemed that the prospect before him was one of unmitigated toil and hardship. The lot of the factory child is perhaps the most miserable that exists even in our relatively uncivilised world. Subjected to the close confinement, the murderous air, the arduous labour of the workshop or the machine-room, at an age when all the nascent human being cries imperiously for moral and material sunshine, starved and stunted in both physical and intellectual growth, it is well-nigh impossible for such an "heir of all the ages" to grow up, even now, other than a dwarfed and wretched specimen of humanity, worthless for any service to the world save that which is marked out by the deadly routine of the great commercial machine, and even for that useful only during a limited period of years before being cast on the scrap-heap. And, dark as are the prospects of the

factory child to-day, things were far worse fifty years ago, when Davitt first became a cog in the vast machinery. From the terrible brutalisation of such an existence, not to be undergone without indelible results by even the strongest in natural endowments of mind and body, Davitt was saved by an event which happened in the early days of his factory life. This was the loss of his right arm.

One morning young Davitt was told off to mind a machine which was ordinarily attended to by a youth of eighteen. The boy, conscious of his inability to perform the task allotted to him, protested, and pointed out to the foreman the danger of an accident. The response was a curse, a blow, and a stern command to return to the work at which he had been placed. "Kicked across the floor of the factory," there was no option but to obey. A few minutes afterwards, the anticipated accident occurred: Davitt's right arm was caught in the machinery and fearfully mangled. Amputation became necessary to save his life; and though the boy's horror of amputation was such that it is said he had to be chloroformed by force in order to permit of the operation being performed, performed it was; and the young Michael, not yet twelve years old, was maimed for life.

To the maimed child's parents, and to his keenly sensitive self, it must have seemed that nothing could be more woeful, more unmitigated disaster, than this accident. The hand of God was upon him; he was henceforward a cripple among his

fellow-men, an incapable, deprived of the physical means of earning his bread. But the weaknesses and the strength of men and of careers lie ever side by side. Misfortune as it was from a superficial point of view, in reality the loss of this arm proved a decided advantage for Davitt. It took him from the factory,—one-armed boys were no use there,—it gave him schooling and a lighter employment. Thus this physical defect made it possible for him, for the first time, to acquire the rudiments of that education which he was afterwards to cultivate so assiduously amid all the sufferings of his manhood's years. And in later times, when Michael Davitt was a prominent figure on the platform, the absence of his right arm was the symbol of his maimed life—of his manhood mured in dungeons, of his youthful strength pitilessly marred in the unequal conquest with the power of England. It aided the crowds who listened to him to realise the tragedy of his career. Through it, better than through the stooped shoulders, the furrowed face, the wistful, gloomy look that ever and again shot into the great kindly eyes, could the rudest of the multitude visualise the supreme torments this man had undergone, the grandeur of the sufferings that had fostered his grandeur of soul. Even those who were better informed than to think (as many did actually think) that the loss of his arm was due to the agonies inflicted upon him in prison as the reward of his patriotism—even those who knew that this injury dated from the childish days before he could have entered

upon the fight of his life, nevertheless instinctively, whenever they reflected upon Davitt's sufferings, called up in the first instance the vision of an empty sleeve. And they were right. For if that pitiful maiming was not sustained at the hands of the alien government of Davitt's native land, it was an indelible mark of his struggle with even a grimmer foe—it had been endured at the hands of that monstrous spirit of Greed of which British imperialism is only one of the uglier manifestations.

The school at which the released factory slave received his education was a Wesleyan school. The circumstance is not without bearing on the development of Davitt's opinions. Not that the "non-Catholic atmosphere" in the slightest degree affected his religious belief. On the contrary, as his residence in England made him all the more ardently Irish, so his term at a Wesleyan school served merely to strengthen his religious convictions—as was shown by his conduct a few years later, when anti-Catholic riots threatened the Catholic churches in Lancashire with destruction. The young Davitt then gave the first proof of his inborn genius for leadership by organising a band of Catholic youths to defend the temples of his faith against fanatic vandalism, and succeeded in preventing the destruction of the chapels at Rochdale, Bacup, and Haslingden itself. In the defence of Haslingden Church, it is recorded that Davitt had only a single companion; but the two intrepid youths, both armed with revolvers, dispersed a

considerable mob by firing over their heads, their assailants believing this to be merely a foretaste of a much more formidable reception by a numerous body of armed men. The importance of his training at a Wesleyan school is this: it taught him the hollowness of the pretences about "danger to faith" under which ecclesiastics of all denominations are accustomed to veil that desire for uncontrolled dominion over education, which is the real ground of their objection to "mixed" or undenominational education. Davitt's own experience convinced him that the association, during the formative years of childhood and youth, of pupils of different religious beliefs, is not only beneficial from a civic point of view, by insensibly inculcating habits of tolerance and mutual respect, but is furthermore, in the case of a youth whose religious training is assiduously looked after at home, apt to strengthen the hold of his family religion upon his emotions and his understanding. Hence he never had any patience with the clerical boycott of Trinity College and the Queen's Colleges, nor with the prominence given to the petty question of denominational control in all educational discussions both in England and Ireland. He knew that the cries of "danger to faith" were but the cloak for a less spiritual form of anxiety; and that, even if they were true, it could only be because the clergy who raised them had failed, through indolence or ignorance, in their fundamental professional duty of religious instruction.

The post-office in Haslingden was kept by a printer named Cockcroft, and into his service the one-armed boy passed, in the dual capacity of "printer's devil" and newsboy. He was then about fifteen years of age. Like all who came in contact with him, Davitt's master thought very highly of him; and in course of a short time he was promoted to the position of book-keeper in the printing establishment, becoming also an assistant letter-carrier. In these capacities he was engaged when the call of Fenianism came to him.

CHAPTER II

THE FENIAN

"For that connection [with the Fenian movement] I offer no apology to this or to any tribunal. If such movements arise in Ireland, or in any country, it is because Government is either unjust or criminally negligent of the first duty of civilised rule" (Speech before *Times* Commission).

FROM the days of the Union to those of the Land League, Irish agitation alternated with painful monotony between the constitutional and the revolutionary forms. A period during which all revolutionary feeling in the country was dead or latent, but which witnessed the more or less successful efforts of Irish representatives in Parliament to obtain redress of various grievances; the insensible settling down of the constitutionalists into the pursuance of a soulless routine, or even a sordid hunt for place and emolument; the consequent growth of rebellious notions among a despairing people; the collapse of the rebellion after a display of much heroism and more heroics; a readiness on the part of the Government to avert another rising by making concessions to the milder agitators; and the revival, on the basis of this factitious and undeserved success, of the constitutional agitation, to go through the same cycle

once again—this seemed as much the predestined course of Irish history as in South America a succession of revolutions or in France a succession of short ministries were once thought eternally inevitable by fatalistic observers. It was Davitt's task to dispel this illusion, and by uniting all that was best in constitutionalism with all that was best in revolution, to put an end to the wearisome, futile see-saw of the two factions, and to create from their synthesis a movement which brought Ireland almost to her goal, and laid down the principles on which that goal can finally be attained.

But to do this he first had to become a Fenian himself. Only through an attempt at revolution could he learn the hopelessness of such an effort in modern conditions. It was, indeed, inevitable that Davitt should become a Fenian. There was no other organised national movement worthy of the name in existence. Constitutionalism was buried in eclipse after the ignominy of the "Pope's Brass Band." Fenianism alone stood for the assertion of Ireland's national rights. It was bound, therefore, to attract to itself all the young spirits in whose hearts the flame of patriotism burned at all. In Davitt's breast that flame blazed with peculiar brilliance and purity. Nurtured on the tales of Ireland's wrong, his eager, active spirit waited only the fitting opportunity to enlist his energies in some definite way in the cause of his country. In the year 1865, when he was nineteen, the occasion came. He attended a meeting, heard a Fenian speech, and, with the full know-

ledge and concurrence of his parents, was a Fenian from that hour.

There is nothing easier than to sneer at the hopes of the Fenians and to ridicule the overweening rashness that could imagine the possibility of coping with the British Empire in armed conflict. In this respect, however, the Fenian projects were much less desperate than it is possible for outsiders to realise after the event. They had the example of Garibaldi's hero-band to encourage them. If they had ever got the length of doing battle on Irish soil against the English troops, even though the latter had probably not sunk so low in the sixties as they did in the nineties, the Fenians might nevertheless have rendered a less despicable account of themselves than is commonly assumed. Their fundamental error lay in imagining that they could ever get to this point. An overwhelmingly great chance of premature betrayal and individual capture was implicit in their whole scheme. Davitt's experience of them led him to the conclusion, later in life, that Irishmen were not fitted to conspire. It might with truth be stated, in a more general form, that the conditions of modern society make conspiracy a matter of extreme difficulty anywhere, and amongst any race of people ; and when the object of the conspiracy involves the enrolment of large numbers of men, grouped on no moral or intellectual principle, but solely on their professions of nationality, it is virtually an impossibility to prevent the entrance of traitors into the ranks of the secret society.

But to recognise this beforehand would be too much to expect from any young man—even to-day. Men tend only too early to become cold and calculating; and it is impossible to contemplate the reckless enthusiasm of the young Fenians without a predominant feeling of proud admiration for the spirit of daring and self-sacrifice which possessed them.

So much, then, for the prudential point of view from which the Fenians are sometimes condemned. It is the only criticism of them which is arguable. That, so long as they could perceive the smallest chance of a successful issue, the young men of the early sixties were, I will not say justified, but morally bound to make an attempt at organised rebellion, is a proposition only questionable by a Tory or a Tolstoy. And even if they themselves had plainly recognised their chances as hopeless, who shall say that they would not still have been bound to make the attempt? The man who will make no move whatever till the absolutely right moment comes, may find on the advent of that rare occasion that his benumbed muscles no longer enable him to grasp it; and for a nation, the next best thing to success is not prudential abstention from the fray, but a glorious and inspiring failure. The supreme justification of Fenianism is the after career of this greatest of the Fenians.

Davitt's career as a Fenian had two phases. There was first the stage in which he went quietly about his usual business at Haslingden, awaiting

the call for action from his leaders. That call came in February 1867, when Davitt was one of the detachment of north of England Fenians told off to carry out the attack upon Chester Castle. The plan, which had something in it of the daring simplicity of Robert Emmet's plot against Dublin Castle, was this: The Castle once in their possession, the stores of arms therein were to be seized. The telegraph wires were to be cut, and the mail train from London to Holyhead stopped near Chester. The conspirators, with their stores of ammunition, were to entrain for Holyhead, where they were to seize the steamer, and convey the arms to an Irish port, for insurrectional use. Traitors in the ranks had, however, informed the Government authorities of the whole scheme; and when Davitt and his little band arrived at Chester, they found that there was nothing for them to do but get home again as quietly as possible. The preparations made to meet them had rendered their whole scheme impossible even of attempt. It was in getting himself and his friends away from the dangerous trap into which they had walked that Davitt gave the first revelation of the capabilities for leadership, the courage and resource in emergencies, that were in him. The confidence in his abilities shown by his chiefs when, in spite of the fact that his lost arm prevented him from handling a rifle, they committed to his charge the captainship of a detachment, was proved not to be misplaced. To enable his companions to escape, he had to supply them with money, which they had

deemed would be unnecessary; he did so by pawning his watch. Davitt himself had been more far-seeing; he had even arranged a perfect alibi, so that, in case suspicion should fall on him, he would have been able to show to the satisfaction of any court of justice that he was at his work in Haslingden all the time! However, there was no necessity to bring this device into play. No suspicion touched him for that time.

With the remembrance of this personal failure to intensify the bitter disappointment caused by the collapse of the various Fenian attempts at rising in Ireland, and the series of State trials which seemed to extinguish all hopes for the movement, a weaker spirit might well have resigned himself to despair and apathy. Not so Davitt: he was one of those most determined to keep the organisation together in the north of England, waiting patiently for a more favourable opportunity, and meantime steadily collecting arms and shipping them to Ireland. It was now, in the moment of defeat, when others quailed, that Davitt flung himself with his fullest ardour into the movement. It was now that he abandoned himself entirely to the work of Fenian organisation. As a cloak for this occupation, he took up, in 1868, the rôle of a commercial traveller dealing in firearms. Under this guise he travelled to and fro throughout England, organising the scattered Fenians, buying rifles and shipping them to Ireland, with all precautions of secrecy, to trusty agents of the Fenian body there. It is interesting to note that one of these agents,

all unknown to Davitt, was a brother of Mr. William O'Brien—a fact which only came to Davitt's knowledge thirty years later, when Mr. William O'Brien, in a review article, disclosed the rôle played in the Fenian movement in the south of Ireland by his long deceased brother. So true it is that nearly all the men of the Parnell movement had their links with the revolutionary movements of the previous generation; and if the men of the present day are cast in less heroic mould, it is largely because the fresh, fierce stimulus of Fenianism has faded into too remote a distance.

We are still, however, too near to Fenianism to permit of its discussion with the desirable indiscretion. Practically speaking, from the day of the abortive expedition to Chester to that of his arrest (14th May 1870) Davitt disappears below the horizon. During this time he led the feverishly fascinating life of the conspirator. The judicial murder of Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien—not because they had unintentionally occasioned the death of a policeman, but because the British public, in one of its periodical fits of blood-thirstiness, demanded a human sacrifice from amongst the dreaded Irish—was sufficient warning to him of the fate he might expect if he fell into the hands of the authorities. He shirked no risk. "If I had been ordered," he said, "I would have gone [to take part in the Manchester rescue]; and if I had gone, there would have been no life lost." His regret, thus expressed, at the accidental death of Sergeant Brett involved, of course, no repudia-

tion whatsoever of the daring rescue in which that death was brought about :—

"I have spoken in praise of Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien, not because a brave policeman was killed in the discharge of his duty, but because these men risked life and liberty, and ultimately lost both, while performing what they believed to be a patriotic work—the rescue of their political leaders. I also believe that these men were executed, not because it was proved or believed that Sergeant Brett was deliberately murdered by the rescuing party, but because the whole transaction was of an Irish political character. . . . They were offered up as political sacrifices to the anti-Irish feeling in England" (Speech before the *Times* Commission).

Davitt's ability and energy, his whole-hearted devotion to the Fenian cause, and the rare combination of coolness and daring which he brought to its service, soon marked him out for promotion to a place of trust and danger in the counsels of the organisation. Soon after his first joining them in 1865 he became "Centre" of his local (Rossendale) "Circle." When he left his employment under Cockcroft, the Haslingden postmaster and printer, in 1868, it was to take up the position of Organising Secretary of the Fenian body for England and Scotland. In this position he was immediately under the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. and received his instructions from one of them. Such, however, was the secrecy by which the Fenian leaders unavailingly essayed to guard against detection, that Davitt did not, at this time and up

to his arrest, know the real name of any member of the Supreme Council save the one with whom he was in direct communication. His principal duties were those connected with the purchase of arms and the despatch of them to the various Fenian centres in Great Britain and to Ireland. He had, at the time of his arrest, a depôt in Leeds, taken by him under the name of Robert Jackson, ostensibly as a storehouse for various kinds of groceries and dry-goods. To this warehouse were forwarded, in the first instance, the rifles purchased by Davitt or made to his order. Thence they were despatched anew, in smaller bales, to the local centres; another fictitious name, other than Jackson, being given as that of the consigner. Those sent to Ireland were mostly addressed to real persons unconnected with the Fenian organisation, and intercepted at the railway stations by Fenian messengers purporting to come on behalf of the consignees. The rifles were packed in barrels, so as to have an appearance as much like soap or some equally harmless commodity, and as little like guns, as possible. All this was excessively perilous work, involving constant travelling about the country and the assumption of a number of aliases, without the possibilities of disguise which one less unmistakably marked by nature could have enjoyed. The slightest hitch in his arrangements would at any time be sufficient to set the police on the track of the whole complicated scheme; and once on the alert, they were not likely to be easily thrown off the trail of the one-armed man who was the

brain as well as the chief executant of the conspiracy. The extraordinary thing is, not that Davitt should have been ultimately tracked down, but that he should have actually succeeded in baffling the detectives for nigh two years after he took up the organisership.

As afterwards in the Land League, Davitt's utmost exertions were put forth to keep the Fenian movement free from the stain of crime. War he was always prepared for, but not assassination. Knowing that the cause in which he and his comrades of the revolutionary organisation were embarked was a holy and a just one, having for its basis the fundamental principles of human liberty and justice, he could not endure the thought of its purity of aim and ideal being tarnished by any intrusion of those vile passions which are only too apt to germinate in the obscurity of a secret conspiracy. Here, in the very nobility and stainlessness of his disposition, lay the destined instrument of his long years of prison suffering. For, when he was brought to trial, the most damning fact adduced in evidence against him was his authorship of a letter written to prevent assassination.

This, the famous "pen" letter, was written in 1869, under the following circumstances. A young Fenian of about eighteen years of age, inferior to Davitt in the ranks of the organisation, having a personal grudge against another member of the society, endeavoured to gratify his hatred under the cloak of zeal for the interests of the cause. He represented to Davitt that the other man was

probably an informer, although he could produce nothing against him except the bare fact that he had been seen talking to a policeman. He suggested to Davitt that this man ought to be assassinated. On Davitt's absolute refusal to have anything to say to such a project, or to countenance it in any way, the would-be assassin apparently dropped the idea. But some time subsequently, when Davitt was in another part of the country, he learned that the youth was taking steps to carry out his plan of revenge on his own account. Fearing lest he might not be able to reach the spot in time to prevent the horrible deed, Davitt wrote to the young man. In writing, his sole purpose was to prevent the crime, his determination to do so being strengthened by doubts whether his own precipitancy in scouting the idea might not have had the effect of simply fortifying the obstinate young man's decision. This time he would take him more quietly: he would express no definite condemnation of the projected assassination, say nothing that would tend to alienate the young man's confidence and destroy his own influence over him; but he would, under cover of a pretended acquiescence in the plan, endeavour to gain time by insisting that the permission of higher authorities in the movement must be obtained before anything was done. Meantime, he himself would communicate with those higher authorities, lay the whole case before them, represent the deadly consequences to the movement which would follow from connivance at murder, and secure the issue

of a definite command to their oath-bound inferior, forbidding him to carry out his deadly design.

This programme was exactly carried out. The letter did gain the necessary time; the youth to whom it was addressed, believing from its tenor that Davitt was won over to the "removal" of the obnoxious one, decided on waiting for the approval of his superiors, which he now thought he could easily gain. Davitt's communications to these superiors, however, had in the meantime had the effect he desired; and the young Fenian was peremptorily forbidden to proceed any further with his design. The life of the threatened man was accordingly saved by Davitt's intervention.

But at the time of Davitt's trial a few months later there was not, and in the nature of the case could not be, any proof of all this. All that was before the public was the letter from Davitt to the planner of murder, which had meantime fallen into the hands of the police in a manner to which I shall allude presently. And this letter, examined as an isolated fact, without any knowledge of the circumstances in which it was written, bore on the face of it the appearance of a letter approving of a project of assassination. Here is this historic letter in full:—

"DEAR FRIEND,—I have just returned from Dundee, which place I have left all right. Your letter of Monday I have just read. I have no doubt but what the account is correct. In reference to the other affair, I hope you won't take any part in it whatever—I mean in the carrying of it

out. If it is decided upon, and you receive Jem's and, through him, Fitz's consent, let it be done by all means; but one thing you must remember, and that is that you are of too much importance to our family to be spared, even at the risk of allowing a rotten sheep to exist among the flock. You must know that if anything happened to you the toil and trouble of the last six months will have been almost in vain. Whoever is employed, don't let him use the pen we are and have been selling; get another for the purpose, a common one. I hope and trust when I return to Man I may not hear that every man, woman, and child know all about it ere it occurred."

Davitt himself afterwards characterised this as "a stupid letter." But, regarded as a means to the accomplishment of its end, it seems to be far from deserving this epithet. There was the indication, in terms sufficiently definite to be understood by any Fenian, that a prior reference to headquarters was essential; there was the modicum of flattery, calculated to deepen in the youth's receptive mind the impression that Davitt was on his side in the matter; there was the discussion of details as to the "pen" (revolver) to be used, thus confirming the belief that all he now had to do was to obtain the formal permission of his chiefs. The letter succeeded in its end; it saved a life, and that is its justification. But in writing it Davitt all unwittingly was signing the warrant for his own committal to over nine years of prison horrors.

In December 1869 Arthur Forrester, a young Fenian, was arrested in Liverpool on suspicion of

being connected with the Fenian society. When the police entered his room they found him tearing up a piece of paper. On this being taken from him, and the pieces fitted together, it proved to be a letter — the letter which has just been quoted. Although, as Lord Chief Justice Cockburn subsequently said at the trial of Davitt, "that letter showed that there was some dark and villainous design against the life of some man," nevertheless no mention of it was made at the examination of Forrester before the magistrates. He was simply charged with being "a person of bad repute," and ordered to find bail for good behaviour—although he had once before been in custody for a short time, after the failure of the projected rising of March 1867. Nor was it long before he found the necessary sureties on this occasion. On 6th January 1870 he was admitted to bail, one of his two bailsmen being the proprietor of the extreme Nationalist and physical force newspaper, the *Irishman*—a man called Richard Pigott.

Soon afterwards the toils began to close around Davitt. His parents went to America about this time, leaving him totally immersed in the conspiracy, and without any home save the temporary resting-places into which his work brought him. One of those beloved parents he was never to see again. His father died while Davitt was undergoing imprisonment.

In March 1870 the detectives got on the track of John Wilson, a Birmingham gunsmith, from whom Davitt purchased large quantities of arms. From

Wilson's shop to a secret depôt in Birmingham, and thence by rail to Leeds, the guns were traced—the detectives, with the concurrence of the railway company, opening the cases in transit to ascertain their contents, and then fastening them up again. From the "Jackson" depôt at Leeds, where Davitt stored them, they were similarly traced to various parts of the country. In six weeks, sixteen consignments of arms, in which Davitt acted as distributor, were thus tracked to different destinations: eight to Ireland, five to Newcastle-on-Tyne, one to Glasgow, and one to Manchester. The sixteenth was a consignment of revolvers not from but to Davitt, who was now in London. The police of Birmingham saw Wilson leave that city with the bag, and the London police, warned by telegraph, were waiting for him at Paddington station on the arrival of the 10.40 p.m. train from Birmingham on the night of Saturday, 14th May 1870. Davitt was also waiting for that train. He was accosted by the detectives, questioned as to what he was doing there, and whom he was waiting for, and was finally taken into custody on the charge of loitering. This was subsequently altered to one of treason felony. At the trial, Lord Chief Justice Cockburn animadverted strongly on the conduct of the officers in questioning Davitt, with a view to obtaining from himself something which might incriminate him, while they had all the time made up their minds to arrest him in any case. According to the judge, the police would have been justified in questioning Davitt if they desired to satisfy themselves by his answers

whether they ought to arrest him or not; but to interrogate him with the predetermined idea of arresting him whatever his answers might be, was, he declared, quite contrary to the spirit of English law. This was only one instance out of many in which the law was strained against prisoners known or suspected to be Fenians. While Davitt was awaiting trial in the House of Detention at Clerkenwell, his communications with his solicitor relative to his defence were intercepted and read by the governor, under pretence that they contained a plan of the prison, in connection with a plot to blow it up! Thus, not merely did the Crown get possession of Davitt's line of defence, but the newspapers were enabled to publish sensational paragraphs to the effect that a fresh plot had been discovered to blow up Clerkenwell prison, and that this time the operations were to be conducted, or at least assisted, from within the prison. This report naturally tended to incense public feeling against Davitt and to diminish the chance of his securing a fair trial by an unprejudiced jury.

Some of the money found on him having been handed back to him for the purposes of his defence, he was required to give a receipt for the same; he was also induced to submit a complaint in writing as to interception of some of the food which he had been permitted to order from outside at his own expense. These two specimens of his handwriting were employed to prove that he wrote the "pen" letter and certain labels, etc., in connection with the despatch of the guns.

To ensure Davitt's conviction, the prosecution deemed it necessary to bring up against him the fact that he had been at Chester on the occasion of the projected attack on the castle there in 1867. Now, Davitt, as we have seen, had actually been at Chester; nevertheless, the evidence on which he was charged with having been there was perjured evidence. John Joseph Corydon, the ex-Fenian who had given the information to the authorities which led to the frustration of the Chester plot, was brought up to the House of Detention to identify Davitt as the man he had seen at some meetings of Fenians held at the time with reference to the Chester affair. As a matter of fact, Corydon had never seen Davitt before. So it was deemed necessary to facilitate the identification. He was therefore allowed to stand in the corridor of the prison with a warder while Davitt was being transferred from one cell to another. After this it was not a very difficult task for the informer to identify the one-armed man in the cell which he had seen him enter.

I leave aside, for the present, some incidents of Davitt's treatment between the time of arrest and his sentence, and pass on to the trial. It commenced on the 15th of July—the day on which France declared war against Prussia. The universal preoccupation with the continental crisis served to divert popular attention from the proceedings at the Central Criminal Court; even in Ireland, Nationalists were too busy organising monster demonstrations of sympathy with the French—not

in the least from any knowledge of the causes of the war, but because English sympathy was understood to be on the side of the Prussians—to have any time for the consideration of the circumstances in which a brave young Irishman was giving his liberty and the best years of his life for the sake of his country. The references to the trial in the Irish press were of the most perfunctory character.

There were three main heads in the charges brought against Davitt. There was, first of all, the series of charges connected with the despatch of arms; in all these Wilson (who was tried with Davitt, having been arrested at the same time) was implicated by the prosecution as much as his fellow-prisoner. Evidence was given with regard to all the different consignments of arms which had been traced directly or indirectly to Wilson or Davitt: it was shown that the weapons were in an unfinished state, and therefore unfit for bona fide sale; that they were forwarded in fictitious names and to fictitious consignees; that Davitt's resources (he had £152 on him at the time of his arrest) were apparently much greater than his station in life would warrant; that no genuine business transactions could be proved in connection with the guns. The defence on this point was that Davitt was speculating in firearms for profit. It was further alleged by his counsel (but without Davitt's authorisation or permission) that the arms were intended for the use of Irish landlords who might wish to protect themselves in the disturbed times! Much, indeed, of what was advanced by counsel on

Davitt's behalf was entirely repugnant to Davitt, and was put forth without any consultation with him.

With regard to the Chester charges, evidence was brought forward to show that a one-armed man called Burke, then dead, who had admittedly been a Fenian, was mistaken by Corydon for Davitt. Further, Mr. Cockcroft, son of Davitt's former employer, was called to testify, not merely to Davitt's general good conduct, steadiness, trustworthiness, and industry while he was in the employment of Cockcroft senior between 1861 and 1868, but also to the specific fact that the office book showed Davitt to have been at home and at work at the time of the Chester affair. This was the long-ago-prepared alibi. However, he would undoubtedly have been condemned to some imprisonment on these two heads alone. But it was the production of the "pen" letter which most seriously prejudiced both judge and jury against him, and ensured his being sent to suffer a long term of penal servitude. Nor were his prospects improved by the appearance in the witness-box of Arthur Forrester. Forrester insisted upon giving evidence for the defence, in spite of Davitt's emphatically expressed wish that he should *not* do so. His story was that the paper found upon him was not an original letter of Davitt's, but a copy in the latter's handwriting. Davitt, he declared, had believed the original document to be a police-trap, and had sent the copy to him (Forrester) in order to obtain his opinion of it. This manifestly trumped-up

story carried no conviction with it; and the general effect of Forrester's evidence was unquestionably to increase the prejudice against Davitt, by seemingly making him a party to the concoction of this clumsy lie.[1]

The damning effect of the "pen" letter may be estimated from the remarks of the Lord Chief Justice in summing up, when he suggested, on the one hand, that the prosecution with regard to the arms need not have been brought once the weapons themselves were seized; and, on the other hand, referred to the letter in the strong terms which I have already quoted.

Had Davitt chosen, even then, he could have exculpated himself at the expense of another. He could have revealed all the circumstances connected with the letter, and have placed in the dock, in his stead, the man to whom it was addressed, the man who had really been plotting a foul crime, and whom Davitt had saved from its perpetration. To such action, under no conceivable circumstances, could Davitt stoop. Even when, before the *Times* Commission, his whole life was the subject of a searching inquisition, and when Davitt for the first time revealed publicly the true history of the letter in detail—even then he felt himself bound in

[1] When Davitt next met this volunteer witness for his defence, in 1879, Forrester had suffered many misfortunes. He had lost a leg in a railway accident, and was destitute. After being on the staff of the *Irish Times* for some years, Forrester went to America, where he obtained a post on the *Irish World*; but from this he was subsequently dismissed. "I have tried to blot him out of my memory as well as I could," Davitt told the *Times* Commission.

honour not to mention the name of the man in question :—

"I have given your Lordships, under the solemnity of an oath, the history of this letter ; and I have done that which I never did before in a somewhat singularly unfortunate existence : I have made an appeal to a man in a personal matter. I asked from that witness-box the man who was alone responsible for the plot which that letter was intended to and did frustrate—a boyish, foolish, and wicked plot—the man who would have stood in my place in the Old Bailey dock nineteen years ago had I chosen to prefer freedom, at the price of faith, to personal friendship ; faithlessness, to penal servitude and honour untarnished—I have asked that man from the safe asylum of America to release me from the moral obligation of silence in his regard, and he has not had the courage to confess that nineteen years ago I saved him from staining his hands in the innocent blood of a guiltless comrade.

"I shall not appeal again."

He did not. Michael Davitt went to his grave with the name of that man unspoken.

Both prisoners were found guilty—guilty of treason felony, by conspiring to rebellion, to deprive Her Majesty of her Royal style as Queen of the United Kingdom, to levy war upon Her Majesty, and by procuring arms and ammunition for these purposes, and by divers other overt acts.

Then, prior to the passing of sentence, Davitt made an earnest appeal to the judge on behalf of Wilson. It mattered nothing to him that by so doing he might damage himself ; for his vehement

assertion of Wilson's innocence amounted to a confession of his own guilt. So far was he from entertaining any sentiments of fear on his own account that he actually asked that Wilson's sentence should be added to his own. The appeal was not entirely without effect. Wilson was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. But Michael Davitt, the man who made this noble and generous appeal on behalf of his English friend—an appeal which the judge was kind enough to say did him great credit—was immediately afterwards sentenced by that same judge to *fifteen years' penal servitude.*

Twenty-four years of age; six feet high, with a vigorous, close-knit frame, of great strength and powers of endurance, in spite of his maiming; with the dark, almost swarthy, visage of the Connaught Kelts (or pre-Kelts), a complexion Irish of the Irish, none the less so because it recalls the Southern races of Europe; with that abundance of strong black hair which accompanies abounding vitality; dark, full, deep-set eyes, flashing out as the beacons of a resolute and lofty soul; sharply distinct features, with no line of indecision; the frame of a hero, the face of a prophet, the eye of a leader of men; with nothing base or false or petty in his whole physical and spiritual nature; burning with a sacred love for his fellow-countrymen, and eager as ever was saint or martyr to spend himself in their service; aglow with all the energy of youthful manhood, every fibre of him demanding activity in a great and worthy cause—such was the man who from the dock contemplated the

shattered ruin of his hopes, his fairest years of life doomed to loathsome confinement, the miasma of which sinks steadily into body and brain and heart, brutalising those whom it does not madden or slay.

The Fenian period of Michael Davitt's life was over; his entrance was made into the great Reformers' University—Prison.

CHAPTER III

PRISON

"I whiled away many an hour in prison thinking over past failures in the struggle for Irish liberty.

"It lightened the burden of penal servitude, and brought compensating solace to some extent for the loss of liberty, of home, and of friends, to think, and reason, and plan how, when freedom should once again restore me to the rights and privileges of society, I should devote to the good of Ireland what strength of purpose or ability of service long years of patient study and yearning aspirations should equip me with in a just cause. . . . When one finds oneself in prison at the age of twenty-four, bereft of everything that endears us to life, and surrounded by every condition of existence that could excite and keep alive passion and resentment, it is a hard and unequal struggle to conquer the spirit of hate and revenge" (Evidence and Speech before *Times* Commission).

WE cannot begin to understand Davitt until we have studied his life in prison, as he has left it on record in his own words. The Davitt of the Land League, the Davitt of the Special Commission, the Davitt of the last great fight against ecclesiasticism in education, is the product of prison, strengthened and remoulded in nobler shape by the calamity which must have irretrievably ruined a nature of less intrinsic grandeur. No one else can ever write the story of that calamitous time as Davitt himself wrote it; the absence of rhetoric, the simple dignity of the narration, makes it for an Irish reader one

of the most poignant documents in our history. Unfortunately, the pamphlet in which he published this narrative in 1878 has long been out of print, though it is well worthy of reproduction in some permanent form.

When arrested in London, on the 14th of May 1870, Davitt was taken to Paddington Police Station, where he underwent the customary questioning and searching. He was then thrust into a cell with an indescribably filthy atmosphere and almost totally dark. In this he remained from Saturday night till Monday morning, without bed or bedding; he was consequently unable to sleep any during the two nights which intervened. When eating, and then only, he was allowed a little light. After the examination before the Marylebone Police Court magistrate on the Monday, he was removed to the Clerkenwell House of Detention, where he was confined till the time of his trial. He was there stripped and searched, he writes, "in a manner almost too disgusting to describe." Five or six times, before the trial, he appeared for examination before the magistrate; and on each of these occasions, on his return to the prison, he was subjected to the same deliberately offensive process of searching in a state of nudity.

Davitt paid for his own food while awaiting trial, but in other respects this period of detention was made as severe for him as possible. He was obliged to clean his cell floor and windows, as well as all the utensils of the cell. "The bedding was the worst and scantiest I have seen during my whole

imprisonment, being nothing but a dirty blanket and rug, and a bare, unmattressed hammock." One hour a day was all that was allowed for exercise; and he was not permitted to speak to anyone.

After the trial and sentence, the reality of penal servitude began. The classification with thieves now commenced. He was now for the first time put into the convict uniform, and had his hair and beard cut close. For the first few days after the sentence he was detained in Newgate, but on the 29th of July was removed to Millbank. The most stringent precautions, as always with the Fenian prisoners since the Manchester Rescue, were taken to guard against the possibility of his escape in the transference along the Thames Embankment from one prison to the other. Chains were fastened round his ankles, so that only some twelve or fifteen inches of stride were possible; and to prevent more effectually any resistance, he was compelled to hold in his single hand the end of the chain with which his feet were bound. Here is a glimpse of the state of his mind on entering Millbank:—

"To leave the broad and cheerful light of day, and be immured in a solitary cell; to exchange the social amenities of life, home, country, and friends for an existence undreamt of by those who know not what a world of suffering is comprised in the meaning of the words 'solitary confinement'—is a feeling impossible to be expressed in words.

"The vagrant sunbeam that finds its way to the lonely occupant of a prison cell but speaks of the liberty which others enjoy, of the happiness that falls to the lot of those whom misfortune has not

dragged from the pleasures of life. The cries, the noise, and uproar of London which penetrate the silent corridors and re-echo in the cheerless cells of Millbank, are so many mocking voices that come to laugh at the misery their walls enclose, and arouse the recollection of happier days to probe the wounds of present sorrow. And if, despite all this, a prisoner should try to raise himself above those depressing influences, and cheat despair of its prey, he will then experience how far man can go in his inhumanity to man, by finding himself denied the only consolation left him in his utter loneliness—the solace of solacing himself. He will find men who will watch for a smile, or some other sign of a happy obliviousness, and then, by some of the many arts practised for the purpose, end the momentary forgetfulness of imprisonment by an exercise of the almost uncontrolled power they wield over their unfortunate charges."

Davitt was ten months in Millbank ; and though Dartmoor was yet to inflict on him greater bodily torments, the Millbank period was apparently that which had the most oppressive effect upon his mental state. Every circumstance that could contribute to drive the unfortunate prisoners to despair and madness was accumulated in Davitt's experience. Many of the Fenian prisoners did actually go mad in Millbank. There was a system of strict silence ; and though the prisoners managed occasionally, at the risk of being punished, to elude this rule, yet the opportunities for such intercourse were so rare that Davitt says his entire conversation with other prisoners, as well as with chaplains and warders, during these ten months hardly amounted

to twenty minutes in all. Often he did not exchange a word with a single being for weeks. Only one hour's exercise per day was allowed, and not even this if the weather was not favourable. Moreover, by a refinement of cruelty, the prisoners were forbidden to walk up and down in their cell. In the winter-time, the sitting posture all day in the cell, with of course no fire, and with cold flags underfoot, combined, with the wretchedly insufficient bedding at night, to deprive many prisoners of the use of their limbs. Davitt's health began to break down after he had been there eight months; and then he was allowed, by the doctor's orders, an extra half-hour's walk daily. There was neither table nor stool in the bare, whitewashed cell; the only seat allowed was a bucket, which held the water supplied for washing purposes. It was provided with a cover, so as to serve the double purpose. Its height, including the lid, was exactly fourteen inches. On this Davitt was obliged to sit at work for ten hours at least each day for ten months. The bent posture necessary for oakum-picking, with no support for the back, entailed an almost torturing punishment, especially upon a tall man. The constant stooping weakened his chest and lessened his height. He was exactly six feet on entering Millbank; when he left it for Dartmoor, ten months later, he measured but five feet ten and a half inches.

Three parallel planks lay at the end of the cell, raised from the stone floor but three inches at the foot and six at the head. This was his bedstead.

Rising at six every morning from this couch, he had to fold up his bed neatly, and then wash and scrub the cell floor with brush and stone. No relaxation in the execution of this task was granted in consideration of Davitt's infirmity. He had to make his one hand do the work of two. So also with the oakum-picking. The warder to whom he pointed out the difficulty to a one-armed man of picking old rope to pieces, coolly told him that many one-armed "blokes" picked oakum very well with their teeth. But Davitt would not ruin his teeth on such work; so he had to manage as best he could with one hand, and have a "reasonable" quantity of coir or oakum picked each day. The work continued till a quarter to nine at night, allowing for meals, exercise, and daily prayers in the chapel.

The iron prison routine takes no account of the idiosyncrasies of its victims. The ordinary prison allowance of food was altogether insufficient to maintain in health a man of Davitt's youth, strength, and physique. For breakfast he had eight ounces of bread and three-quarters of a pint of cocoa. For dinner, on four days of the week, four ounces of meat (weighed with the bone), with six ounces of bread and a pound of potatoes; on one day in the week a pint of shin-of-beef soup replaced the meat, and on another a pound of suet pudding. The Sunday dinner was twelve ounces of bread, four ounces of cheese, and a pint of water. The daily supper was six ounces of bread and a pint of "skilly"—supposed to contain

two ounces of oatmeal. After living on this diet without complaint for three months, Davitt, finding that he was losing weight, applied to the doctor for a little more food. His request was refused.

An aggravation of the torments of the prison was due to its situation in the heart of London :—

" A circumstance in connection with the situation of Millbank may . . . give some faint idea of what confinement there really means. Westminster Tower clock is not far distant from the penitentiary, so that its every stroke is as distinctly heard in each cell as if it were situate in one of the prison yards. At each quarter of an hour, day and night, it chimes a bar of the 'Old Hundredth,' and those solemn tones strike on the ears of the lonely listeners like the voice of some monster singing the funeral dirge of time. Oft in the lonely watches of the night has it reminded me of the number of strokes I was doomed to listen to, and of how slowly those minutes were creeping along ! The weird chant of Westminster clock will ever haunt my memory, and recall that period of my imprisonment when I first had to implore Divine Providence to preserve my reason and save me from the madness which seemed inevitable, through mental and corporeal tortures combined. That human reason should give way under such adverse influences is not, I think, to be wondered at : and many a still living wreck of manhood can refer to the silent system of Millbank and its pernicious surroundings as the cause of his debilitated mind."

To Millbank succeeded Dartmoor—less torturing than Millbank in some respects, perhaps, but

immeasurably worse in others. Here Davitt was to endure six years of death in life. From the centre of London to the wastes of Dartmoor was indeed a change, but one which brought no ameliora-tion of the prisoner's condition :—

"If the whole of the three kingdoms were searched through for the purpose of discovering a place whereon to erect a prison, with the view of utilising the rigours of a severe climate, damp fogs, more than average rainfall, and a lengthened winter season, with all that was desolate and uninviting in the aspect of nature to assist in the punishment of prisoners, no more suitable place than Dartmoor could be found if a Procrustean spirit guided the search. Buried in the midst of barren and boulder-strewn Devonshire moors, it is peculiarly adapted for an abode of misery."

The cells in which Davitt was confined for five years of his stay in Dartmoor were master-pieces of ingenious cruelty. In the centre of a large hall was erected an iron framework, about thirty feet in height, and divided by slate floors and roofs into four tiers. Each tier was again divided into forty-two cells, making a total of 168 for each hall in which one of these honeycomb structures was erected. Each cell was seven feet long, four feet wide, and a little over seven feet high. Two and a half inches of an aperture under the door of each cell was the only provision for ventilation. This, of course, did not open into the external air, but into the hall, through which alone the ventilating air could gain admittance

to the cells. In the cells on the three lower tiers there were a few small perforations in the corner for the escape of the vitiated air ; but the top cells, in which Davitt was at first located, had no exit for the air other than that by which it entered, under the cell door. The air breathed out from the lower cells, mingling with that in the imperfectly ventilated hall, ascended to the upper cells, and in these it was almost impossible to breathe in the summer heat. It was common for the prisoners to sleep with their heads to the door, in order to obtain air and avoid suffocation. M'Carthy, whose death was undoubtedly due to his torture in these cells, used to draw his bed across the door ; and Davitt himself was often obliged, in the summer-time, to go down on his knees and put his mouth to the bottom of the door, in order to snatch a breath of semi-foul air. He begged the governor to remove him from such a situation, both because of the insufficient air and because he had no light to read by. But not till the effects of the foul air manifested themselves in skin eruptions was the request acceded to, and his quarters removed to a lower tier. Each of these horrible cells was fitted with a couple of plates of thick, dull glass, eighteen inches by six, transmitting a vague light from the dim hall outside. Davitt was often obliged to lie at full length on the cell floor, and place his book where the light from under the door would fall on it, in order to be able to read. When there was a fog, it was impossible to read in half the cells.

As for the food supplied in Dartmoor, it was approximately the same as that of Millbank in quantity; but in quality it was much worse, and filthily cooked. Putrid meat, decayed vegetables, stinking soup were among the everyday articles of diet. Often, coming in from work weak with hunger and fatigue, the prisoner was unable to eat what was supplied to him, and had to return to his task fortified only by a few ounces of bad bread:—

"To find black beetles in soup, 'skilly,' bread, and tea, was quite a common occurrence; and some idea may be formed of how hunger will reconcile a man to look without disgust upon the most filthy objects in nature, when I state as a fact that I have often discovered beetles in my food, and have eaten it after throwing them aside, without experiencing much revulsion of feeling at the sight of such loathsome animals in my victuals. . . . It was quite a common occurrence in Dartmoor for men to be reported and punished for eating candles, boot oil, and other repulsive articles; and, notwithstanding that a highly offensive smell is purposely given to prison candles to prevent their being eaten instead of burned, men are driven, by a system of half-starvation, into an animal-like voracity, and anything that a dog would eat is nowise repugnant to their taste. I have seen men eat old poultices found buried in heaps of rubbish, and have seen bits of candle pulled out of the prison cesspool and eaten after the human soil was wiped off them."

On a diet of this character, Davitt, with his one arm, was put to the severest labour. Stone-breaking was the first task set him. After a week

his hand became blistered by the action of the hammer, and he was unable to continue. Then he was put to the speciality of Dartmoor—cart-labour. Harnessed, along with seven other men, to a cart, like a beast of burden, Davitt had to cart stones, coal, manure, and all kinds of things, through the prison grounds; in particular they had to supply all parts of the prison with coals. Over the head of each of these human draft-horses was put a collar, passing over one shoulder and under the other; this was fastened by a hook and chain to the cart. Every cart party was attended by an officer with a staff when within the prison, and by an armed guard when working outside. Each prisoner had to bend forward and pull with all his strength, or the "driver" would report him for idleness. This work had often to be done in rain and sleet; with no fire or other means of drying one's clothes afterwards.

An accident to the remnant of Davitt's right arm secured his removal from amongst the cart parties, by the doctor's orders, after a few months. He was then again set to stone-breaking, at which task he continued during the winter of 1870–1. His first spell of stone-breaking had been in the summer-time, and then he was employed in a shed; but in the foggy, wet, Dartmoor winter, the work had to be accomplished outside. In every detail the deliberate cruelty of the system was calculated to kill or madden the victim.

Spring came, and the effects of the winter's work in the open had not sufficiently wasted the

strength of the man they meant to kill. A new refinement of diabolical ingenuity was next essayed. Davitt was put to the task of putrid-bone breaking; and at this he was kept all through the summer. The "bone-shed" stood on the brink of the prison cesspool; its floor was level with the pool which laved its walls. Here, in a little building twenty feet by ten, all the bones from the meat supply of the prison were pounded to dust for manure. The bones were brought into the shed after putrefying for weeks in the heat of the sun. "The stench arising from their decomposition, together with the noxious exhalations from the action of the sun's rays on the cesspool outside, no words could adequately express; it was a veritable charnel-house." This was the task which more than any other—more than exposure or starvation—ruined Davitt's health, and sowed in his constitution seeds of disease and weakness from which he never completely recovered. He applied to both the governor and the doctor for transference to some other task, but in vain. This work was the task of those who were called "doctor's men," or prisoners of weak health unfit for heavy manual labour!

When Davitt was long enough in the prison to be entitled to a pint of tea for breakfast instead of "skilly," he was removed to a hard-labour party; for invalids or light-labour men were not allowed tea at any period of their imprisonment. But the heavier task was welcomed, since it led to a release from the abominable bone-shed.

Drawing carts laden with stone and slate, digging and shifting sand, mortar-making, water-carrying for the mortar, cement-making, carrying slates up a steep incline to the roof of a new wing—these were among the occupations in which Davitt was now employed. The heaviest work, however, was crank work—winding up by an iron crank the stones needed for building the new wing. There were four men to every crank; "and," writes Davitt characteristically, "my being one of the four compelled me to perform as much work as either of the others, as the task would fall heavier upon them otherwise."

Three prisoners lost their lives while the building of this new wing was going on, owing to the warders' ignorance, or neglect, of the necessary precautions in the erection of scaffolding. Inquests were held inside the prison, and the matter carefully hushed up. A man who fell from the scaffolding was sent, not to the infirmary, but to the punishment cells, and compelled to work again the next day.

When the building was finished, Davitt was no longer required to act as mason's labourer, and he returned to stone-breaking. This was his task from the end of 1873 till August 1876. For three winters he worked in the coldest part of the prison yard, where the prevalent north-east wind blew full in his face, without the slightest shelter, or the least means of keeping his numbed limbs from freezing save the incessant plying of the hammer. So arctic were the Dartmoor winters that it was

ultimately found necessary to provide the outdoor workers with bags to shield their hands from frost-bite—not out of any compassion for them, but because no outside work, it was feared, could otherwise be performed. Davitt applied to be allotted some indoor labour in the winter-time, but there was no break in the regularity with which all requests for change of work were received. External happenings, however, brought about the change that no feeling of humanity could effect.

In April 1876 six Fenians escaped from their place of durance in Fremantle. This escape, of which Davitt gives a graphic account in the concluding chapter of his book on Australia, is known as "the unconstitutional amnesty of Western Australia." It was organised by John Devoy and John Breslin, the latter being the man who had previously enabled James Stephens to escape from Richmond Bridewell in Dublin. Davitt characterises it as the most successful feat ever performed by the Clan-na-Gael organisation. After this daring rescue no Fenian was considered safe enough for even the most limited degree of liberty. Davitt was therefore taken from the work in the open air and set to work in the prison wash-house, in the very centre of the buildings. At the same time he was transferred from the iron cells which he had hitherto occupied to the penal cells. These cells were in some ways better than the ordinary iron cages, being larger and better ventilated; but they were reserved, as a

rule, for incorrigibles, who could only be kept in hand by hunger and cold. Consequently, with all these half-maddened men around, it was virtually impossible to snatch a wink of sleep in them. In these surroundings Davitt remained till the eve of his release.

Throughout his prison life Davitt passed from one horror, from one example of inhuman cruelty, to another. He was now free from the severe winter work in the open air ; in compensation, he was under special surveillance, and the work he had to do was calculated to attack his constitution in yet another direction. The heaviest task in the washing-room was allocated to him. He was physically unable, with one hand, to take part in the washing of the linen. Consequently, he was placed permanently in charge of the wringing machine, in which linen for a thousand men, with washings for the officers' mess and rooms, had to be wrung every week, with the addition, every fortnight and month respectively, of flannels and sheets for the same number. The machine required the constant attendance of two men to turn its two handles. Davitt, with his one arm, had to turn as much as the other man with two, and very often more, when his companion proved lazy. Nor was this all. The other man engaged in this severe labour was changed every week, men having been frequently reported for refusing to continue such heavy work indefinitely ; but Davitt, unable to take his turn at the washing with the rest, was kept on the machine without

a rest or a change. The heavy work, and the profuse perspirations induced by the heated atmosphere of the wash-house, reduced Davitt's weight very considerably while he was at this employment, which lasted till his release in December 1877. His weight a week after his liberation was only eight stone ten pounds—" not, I think," he remarks, " the proper weight for a man six feet high and at the age of thirty-one." Besides his work at the wringer he had to sort his share of the dirty linen every Monday morning; and " singularly enough," to use Davitt's own significant though restrained words, " the infirmary portion was part of my share, and I had consequently to handle the articles worn by prisoners suffering from all manner of skin diseases and other disgusting afflictions."

The degrading searchings, to which the prisoners were subjected four times daily, were in no instance relaxed in the case of Davitt, in spite of his being a political prisoner and a uniformly well-behaved one. But not content with subjecting him to the regular prison treatment, along with all kinds of malefactors, he was accorded exceptionally severe treatment, particulars of which he gave in the pamphlet from which several quotations have already been made. He was legally entitled, as a good-conduct prisoner, to receive visitors on application. But during the seven years and seven months of his incarceration he was not once, in spite of repeated applications, permitted to see a friendly face. Special orders to that effect were

issued by the Home Secretary, Mr. Bruce, afterwards Lord Aberdare.

Again, the ordinary convicts—thieves, murderers, and the like—were allowed to select a companion from the same ward to exercise with on Sundays. This little touch of human sympathy was denied to Davitt. He and another Fenian prisoner in Dartmoor, Chambers, repeatedly asked to be allowed to exercise together; but the request was constantly refused. No explanation of this discrimination against the two Fenians was ever given. They were never permitted, on Sundays or at any other time, to exchange a word with each other, with the cognizance of the authorities. Another instance of his exceptional treatment is the steady refusal of all his requests for change of work:—

"Applications for transfer from party to party are of everyday occurrence in prison, and are invariably granted by the Governor, as prisoners are entitled to change of labour when their employments may be either too heavy or injurious to their health, or when they can show themselves more capable of performing one class of work than another. Every application made by me for more suitable employment was refused, and I was invariably put either to labour that would throw as much work on me as if I were able-bodied, or to some task—such as bone-breaking in a low shed by the prison cesspool in summer, or stone-breaking in the open air during the rigours of winter—which would ensure punishment the most injurious to my health being inflicted upon me. No other conclusion than this is possible from the singularly

harsh manner in which I was treated, while complying with rules in every particular."

For a month, in the summer of 1872, Davitt was transferred to the prison at Portsmouth. It was a welcome, though brief, interlude in the Dartmoor horror, especially as this was the time when he was engaged in the putrid-bone-breaking. The quality of the food in Portsmouth was far superior to that in Dartmoor. On the other hand, the quantity allotted to Davitt was less; he was placed on "light-labour" fare, because his one hand incapacitated him from heavy labour. Yet at this very time he was employed in "skintling bricks," in which task he had to do as much as any of his two-handed companions in misfortune. He pointed this out to the doctor, as a reason why he should be allowed full rations, but in vain.

But it was the journey to and from Portsmouth that afforded perhaps the most striking example of the malice with which the Irish Nationalist was treated as compared with the English thief or murderer:—

"In cases of transfer from prison to prison, convicts are handcuffed, by one hand only, to a chain that runs the whole length of the number of prisoners, and passes through a ring in each man's handcuff. By this means each convict has one hand at liberty to eat his food, attend to calls of nature, etc., if he is fortunate enough to be possessed of two; and if not, it is customary to substitute a body-belt for a handcuff, in order to give him the use of one hand also. No such consideration was shown to me. I was purposely placed

between two of the filthiest of the twenty-nine convicts, and had my wrist handcuffed back to back with one of them. I appealed against this ere I left Dartmoor, and requested a belt in lieu of a handcuff, or at least to be put at the end of the chain; but neither would be granted. One of the two between whom I was chained was afflicted with mephitis, or stinking breath, and the other, I think, with scrofula. During the journey to Portsmouth this latter one, to whose hand mine was linked, had an attack of diarrhœa, and I had to submit to the horrors of such a situation, as my hand would not be unlocked from his.

"I was ordered back to Dartmoor again on the 16th of July 1872, and on this return journey I was accompanied by a madman, or, as he would be termed in prison slang, a 'barmy bloke.' I was handcuffed to him, of course, and, while waiting for a train at Exeter, he managed to divest himself of most of his clothing, because he would not be allowed to ask people for tobacco. My journey back was not much pleasanter than the one coming away."

The gratuitous pieces of petty tyranny to which Davitt was subjected, for no other apparent reason than that he was an Irish political prisoner, cannot all be narrated here. He himself has left them on record for who will to study them. Now it was punishment cells for refusing to carry a nauseous tub which the doctor soon afterwards certified was too heavy for him to lift. Again it was punishment cells and bread and water for refusing to gratify a peculiarly insolent and overbearing warder by calling him "sir," which the

prison rules did not require. At another time it was wanton rummaging in his cell, to give him as much trouble as possible in setting it to rights :—

"I have often come into my seven-foot-by-four cell, dripping wet, after drawing a cart about like a beast of burden in the winter's rain or snow, and, with saturated clothes upon my back, had to gather up my bed and bedding, and put to rights what had been disarranged, for no other motive than to give me work to do during my dinner hour, and thus deprive me of whatever little pleasure I might otherwise enjoy."

The prison rule and custom that the treatment of a prisoner is to be determined by his conduct in the prison, and not by his original offence, were disregarded, or rather reversed, in Davitt's case. The prison authorities never forgot that he was a Fenian, and maltreated him accordingly.

Such, in outline, is the record of Michael Davitt's life in prison. It is not pleasant reading, either for Irishmen or Englishmen; but it is salutary for both. It is well for Englishmen to be reminded that, in the treatment of political prisoners as in other branches of repression, there is no page in the history of, let us say, Russian tyranny which cannot be paralleled from the annals of England's treatment of the Irish claim to independence and equal laws. Indeed, who can study the narratives (autobiographical in each case) of the imprisonments of Davitt and of Kropotkin, his Russian analogue, without being struck by the comparative lenity and humanity

of the Russian methods? Englishmen are fond of priding themselves upon the (supposed) fact that all the worst examples of their injustice and inhumanity with respect to Ireland are buried in the distant past, and to regard as astonishingly perverse Ireland's persistent clinging to these remote remembrances. It is well for them to be reminded that a man who lived amongst us a few short months ago, who might have been with us for years to come had not English prisons sown the seeds of death in his magnificent frame, bore on his memory the searing traces of such an appalling record as is here unfolded. Such a reflection may perhaps help them to understand that there may be other reasons for Ireland's persistent hostility to England, and rooted distrust of her good faith, than a double dose of original sin.

For Irishmen the lesson of Michael Davitt's imprisonment is even simpler and clearer. It is the lesson of self-sacrifice for the cause of liberty, of which Irish history in every age affords so many shining examples. None, however, surpassing that with which Michael Davitt presents us; while his proximity to our own time lends a special vividness to the tale of his sufferings, invests with a more powerful appeal the force of their example.

All this was endured, too, without his being either daunted or soured; that is the supreme marvel. Like the great Russian to whom I have already compared him, Davitt came from Dartmoor prepared to do and dare as much

in the future as in the past. Knowing the horrors he had left, knowing that at any moment it was in the power of the Government he was fighting to send him back to a renewal of those horrors, he never allowed this consideration to deflect his straightforward course of action in the slightest degree. The courage of the reformer who faces prison once *may* be in part due to ignorance; the man who, having experienced what penal servitude means, cheerfully submits himself to it a second time for the sake of his cause, has earned the right to the epithet heroic.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW DEPARTURE

"The conception of some such movement did more than give to my thoughts a congenial occupation while in the companionship of the thieves of Dartmoor Prison. It represented the triumph of what was forgiving over what was revengeful in my Celtic temperament" (Speech before *Times* Commission).

MEANTIME, the Amnesty Association had not been idle. This body, formed after the State trials of the Fenians, offered a platform on which all patriotic Irishmen could stand, no matter what their precise political convictions, provided they felt revolted by the savagery with which Britain was wreaking vengeance on the men who had dared to challenge her right in Ireland. Constitutionalists like Isaac Butt found it possible to work along with advanced revolutionaries in pursuance of this one definite humane end: the release of the Fenian prisoners. As sometimes happens in such cases, co-operation on the limited scale, when that co-operation was genuine and whole-hearted, without underlying selfish motives, led the way to association on a larger field; and many a man who entered the amnesty agitation with a strictly limited aim found himself led on to active work in the wider movement for Ireland's national

rights. The Home Rule Association, and the party led by Butt, which paved the way for the more effective party of Parnell, sprang out of the gatherings on behalf of amnesty. The Amnesty Association, by keeping steadily before the public eye the enormity of the "punishment" which England's helpless victims were undergoing, made it impossible for this campaign of political and racial vengeance to be carried on indefinitely; and although in too many cases they did not effect the release of the sufferers before life or reason was irretrievably impaired, yet they did succeed, in the long-run, in restoring to liberty and friends many who might, but for their action, have died in English jails. Their greatest success was attained in 1870, when a large number of Fenians, who had been imprisoned since 1867, were released. This batch included all the more prominent leaders who had been captured; so that such cases as Davitt's were very likely to be overlooked thereafter, especially as his imprisonment began just at the time when this jail delivery was being carried out. It was Isaac Butt who secured that Davitt should not altogether be forgotten. In 1872 Butt wrote to a friend, also interested in the amnesty movement, asking him to look up full particulars concerning the case of "a poor young fellow who seems to have been forgotten by everybody. He was tried and sentenced to penal servitude the year the other Fenians were liberated." Davitt, who never forgot a kindness, gratefully records, in his *Fall of Feudalism*,

this intervention of Butt on his behalf as "one instance of his kindly nature." Butt, who initiated so much that he afterwards got little credit for, certainly initiated in this manner the public interest in Michael Davitt, which found expression on his release from his living grave in the public reception accorded to him in Dublin and the bonfires which illumined the Mayo hills.

But not till five years had elapsed did the importunities of the Amnesty Association, and those of the public whom they had awakened to a sense of wrong, produce any effect; five years of the bitterest Michael Davitt had to endure. Meantime, the prisoner's health was steadily growing worse. Had his incarceration lasted much longer, it would infallibly have killed him, as it did M'Carthy. It was, indeed, only owing to the exceptional strength of his frame and constitution that he survived the tortures described in the previous chapter. Even his great strength could not have sustained the burden of the fifteen years which were his sentence had he had to work them out in full. Realising this, Davitt, in 1877, set about working out a plan of escape, stimulated thereto by the fact that at last he had discovered a friendly warder. For the execution of his plan, however, money was of course required; and with that high spirit which distinguished him from his first years to his last, Davitt resolved to try to earn the money instead of appealing for it to any of the friends who would have been glad to help him. He decided to write verses and forward them to the *Irishman*, then, under

Richard Pigott's editorship, the most advanced Nationalist and physical force organ. Means were found to get the verses secretly forwarded, together with a pencilled note, in which Davitt mentioned his need of a few pounds for a private purpose, and his desire to earn them by contributing to the *Irishman*. Pigott, although he was then playing the "extreme" game for all it was worth (and it had been worth a good deal to him since the suppression of the *Irish People*, bringing him in at one time an income of about £2000 a year), paid no heed to Davitt's appeal. But he kept the pencilled note. Ten years later he used it as a model by the aid of which to forge Davitt's handwriting for the *Times*.

No assistance was to be derived from that quarter. And before the plan of escape could be fully matured, release came in another way. On the 19th of December 1877, while Davitt was "sweating at his work" in the wash-house of Dartmoor Prison, he was summoned to the governor to receive the welcome and entirely unexpected news of his discharge on ticket-of-leave. Within a few hours afterwards he was again a free man in London.

Relatives to meet him Davitt had none, his family being all in America; but he was greeted by two sets of friends—the old and the new. His former associates in the revolutionary organisation, or such of them as were still in the country and free, were sought out by him in the first instance, and he immediately rejoined the Brotherhood—not, however, with the same crude enthusiasm

which had inspired him in his boyish days. The Prison University had moulded him into a man, of wide outlook, keen insight into the heart of things Irish and universal, unfailing sympathy for the wretched, marked shrewdness in the estimation of political possibilities. In prison he had thought out the whole history of Ireland's long and comparatively ineffective struggle — comparatively, that is, to the amount of zeal, and energy, and disinterested patriotism devoted to the service of her cause. His own movement, Fenianism, might be fairly taken as typical of the best of those bygone struggles. It had lacked nothing in purity of motive, in self-sacrificing devotion, in lofty and ideal conceptions of Ireland's mission and rightful place among the nations: if these high qualities could have made it a success, a success it must assuredly have been.[1] Nor had ability among its leaders been wanting; yet it had failed, and failed miserably. Why was this? Why could it be, unless that all this energy, all this moral and intellectual power, had been somehow diverted into a wrong channel, wherein no really effective work could in the nature of the case be accomplished? Searching for the hidden flaw which had rendered all the ideals and all the sacrifices of Fenianism of no avail, he found it in the secrecy which stamped its proceedings and prevented it from obtaining the adhesion of the masses of the people—intensely

[1] "The intense earnestness of purpose, the spirit of self-sacrifice and utter unselfishness, which have been the qualities conspicuous in the great majority of active Fenians" (*Fall of Feudalism*, ch. xi.).

Catholic, and therefore opposed to secret societies on conscientious grounds—while it at the same time permitted, and even insensibly encouraged, the entrance into the ranks of an undesirable type of man.[1] Davitt therefore rejoined the ranks of the Brotherhood with the definite object of doing away with this secrecy and persuading his associates in it to abandon the devious paths of secret conspiracy for an open agitation, in which the bulk of the people could be enlisted, which would have sufficient revolutionary fire to be really dangerous to British rule in Ireland, and which at the same time would not "clash defiantly" with the armed forces of the Empire.

Parallel with his transition from a belief in secret conspiracy to that in open agitation, Davitt's mind travelled along another line of thought from the airy idealism of the romantic revolutionary to the practical idealism of the social reformer. The leaders of Fenianism, themselves men filled with the loftiest ideals of self-sacrifice, had made the error of thinking that the common man, taken in the mass, would or could be ready to risk his all

[1] "In illegal organisations relying for safety mainly upon the loyalty of its members, the larger the number in the ranks, the weaker become the links which hold it safely against the intrusion of informers and the cognisance of Dublin Castle. Heretofore the plan had been to recruit members anyhow and anywhere, and then, with the boast of a 'very strong' body numerically, to think of obtaining weapons with which to arm the members. Better to make the accumulation of arms a prior consideration to the swearing-in of men under conditions which scarcely suggested a common-sense protection against unsteady or disreputable elements, out of which danger or the hope of reward would easily enlist the treachery of an unfaithful member" (*Fall of Feudalism*, ch. x.).

for the freedom of Ireland in the abstract. The western peasant doubtless hated English rule; but he hated more vividly the immediate tyranny under which he suffered daily—that of the landlord. Fenianism did nothing to remedy his immediate grievance. Fenianism would have retorted, with truth, that landlordism was only one of the results of British rule in Ireland, and that in seeking to remove the cause it was at the same time engaged indirectly in abolishing the effect. But although the political physician must always direct his attention to the radical causes of social disease, he will find it difficult to persuade his more ignorant patients that he is not a quack unless he can produce an immediate amelioration of the most painful symptoms. The poor tenant who lived on the verge of starvation owing to rack-rents, and was ever and again pushed over into its abyss by recurrent famine, had nothing to give to a revolutionary movement except his life; and Fenianism could never get the length of asking this sacrifice of him by presenting him with an opportunity for open warfare. Partly, then, from its secrecy and partly from its unpractical idealism, Fenianism never succeeded in getting a hold upon any great portion of the people. Davitt determined to remedy this by making the land question the motive power of the open agitation. The steam thus generated would enable the land agitation, like an engine, to reach its own goal and at the same time drag the national question thither.

The image of the locomotive is Fintan Lalor's.

He, thirty years before, had mapped out for the Irish people a plan of campaign identical in essence with that now conceived by Davitt. There was not, however, any borrowing on Davitt's part, but an independent rediscovery of ideas that had formerly come out of due time and produced no direct effect. Davitt had never heard of Lalor's proposals, nor read his articles expounding them in the *Irish Felon*, till after his own plan had been thought out. When he did come across them, a couple of years later, they served of course to crystallise his faith in the efficacy of his scheme and to give him fresh courage to pursue it, seeing that he was on the true lines of evolution in Irish politics. Lalor's words did not sow the seed, but they helped it to ripen in Davitt's mind. Both the time and the man were better suited for the propounding of these ideas than when they were first put forth. Lalor came in an unpropitious moment—too late for the famine, too soon for the revival after the deathly post-famine trance. And at any time the little hunchbacked genius of Queen's County was not the man, physically or intellectually, who could have carried out the gigantic task which he has the glory of suggesting. He was essentially a man of thought and unfit for action. It remained for Davitt, the thinker and the doer both, the practical idealist, to set the great work on foot. He thus became the pioneer of that political school which triumphantly emerged in England only at the General Election of 1906—the school which, whatever its ultimate political ideas, is primarily

concerned with questions of social reform. The movement which sprang from the brain of Michael Davitt in Dartmoor was the first labour movement in these islands.

Besides his old friends in the revolutionary movement, whom he thus rejoined and set about converting to his views, Davitt also met the leading constitutionalists who had been agitating for his release. Butt was among the earliest to welcome him. More notable, however, was that first meeting with Parnell which took place at this time. Parnell was then just beginning to come into public notice as the most prominent exponent of the obstructive policy invented by Biggar. Davitt had heard, while still in prison, enough about Parnell and his work to be curious to meet him. He has left us on record his opinion of Parnell after their first meeting :—" An Englishman of the strongest type, moulded for an Irish purpose "—an impression the justice of which, as illustrated by all Parnell's subsequent career, shows Davitt's keenness in judging men. They discussed politics, of course, at this meeting ; but it was not till later that Davitt took the opportunity of informing Parnell of his full plans. At this time he only told him that he was rejoining the revolutionary movement. Davitt's general impression of Parnell was sufficiently favourable to encourage him to develop yet further in his mind the plan of bringing the revolutionaries to a certain extent behind the constitutional movement, now that that movement had a leader of strength and determination.

Davitt made a short stay in London, during which three other Fenians—Chambers, O'Brien, and M'Carthy—were released. The four started for Ireland on 12th January 1878, and were received with the greatest popular enthusiasm in Dublin, all sections of Nationalists uniting to honour them. During a stay of a few days in Dublin Davitt took the opportunity to call on Pigott to thank him for the part played by the *Irishman* in the amnesty movement. It was the only time Davitt and Pigott met face to face to converse.

A tragic incident marked these days in Dublin. The excitement of the reception proved too much for the enfeebled frame of M'Carthy, worn out by his long and savage imprisonment. On a morning shortly afterwards the four ex-prisoners were invited to breakfast with Parnell in his hotel. There M'Carthy was suddenly taken faint, and died before the eyes of his friends without any possibility of help being rendered to him. This shocking testimony to the cruelty of the treatment of prisoners evoked widespread manifestations of public feeling, especially after the coroner's jury had returned a verdict of death from heart disease, accelerated by the treatment received in prison. A noteworthy circumstance in connection with this death was the refusal of the Dublin Catholic churches to receive the body of poor M'Carthy, because he had been a member of a society condemned by the Church. Davitt remembered, when his own turn to die came, this instance of inhumanity on the part of the churches, and left instructions

that his remains should be conveyed to the one church which ultimately was found to take in the body of poor M'Carthy—namely, the Church of the Carmelite Friars in Clarendon Street.

The funeral over, Davitt went down to Mayo, to revisit the place of his birth for the first time since his departure thence as a child of six. He was received with great enthusiasm by his own people, bonfires blazing on all the hillsides in his honour. This, like every manifestation of sympathy with the ideas of the Fenians, was carefully watched by the Government; and when, some time afterwards, it became the duty of the Irish members in Parliament to raise the question of a fuel-famine in the west, the Chief Secretary, Mr. James Lowther, was ready with the taunt that the people had had turf enough recently to light bonfires for the release of a discharged convict.

After an inspection of the condition of Mayo, an inspection which further stimulated him to the work he had resolved to undertake, Davitt returned to England with the other two Fenians who had been released along with him, and started on a campaign in favour of the amnesty movement, which was still necessary so long as a single prisoner remained within England's jails. Davitt now wrote out that statement of what he endured in prison from which I have quoted so extensively in the preceding chapter, for the purpose of influencing public opinion in England and Scotland in favour of the release of the remaining prisoners. This was then published in pamphlet form, and had a con-

siderable effect in compelling the Government to set free the five additional prisoners some time later. Meantime, the power of simple, restrained narrative shown by Davitt in this unvarnished account, and the desire of the Irish in Great Britain to see for themselves the man who had gone through so much for Ireland, suggested the idea of his taking to the lecture platform on behalf of the amnesty agitation. His first public appearance as lecturer was on the 9th of March 1878, in London; and thereafter he toured through many of the principal towns in the north of England, where he received a most hearty reception, not merely from the Irish population, but from the non-Irish as well. Many of the Lancashire towns which he visited remembered Davitt as a boy, and honoured the nobility and the sufferings of the man even when they did not agree with his political and national standpoint. It was now that Davitt commenced the work of converting the working classes of Great Britain to the justice of the Irish cause, a task in which he was to have such success in after years.

Largely on account of the revelations which had been made as to the treatment of Davitt and his companions, a Royal Commission was appointed in February of this year to inquire into the administration of the Penal Servitude Acts. Davitt sent the published statement of his prison life to this Commission (which had Lord Kimberley for its chairman), and was examined before it with reference to that statement in June. Some members of the Commission, in examining him, tried to show

that he was influenced by bias in his statements, and had been guilty of exaggeration in describing the horrors of Dartmoor. Only in one trifling instance did they succeed in showing that any such exaggeration had taken place: he had written, "I have seen *men* eat poultices," and it appeared that he had actually witnessed only one such case. The insignificance of this rhetorical exaggeration throws into stronger relief the absolute veracity of his narrative. His suggestions for the reform of English prisons were in the direction of humanisation—the line actually taken, not only by that Commission's report, but by the whole trend of penal legislation ever since down to the provisions relating to juvenile offenders in the Children's Bill of 1908. He was especially insistent upon the need for classification, and the separation of young boys from old jail-birds, who exercised an incredibly demoralising effect over them.

Another task on which Davitt now embarked was the conversion of Parnell to his plans. On the way to one of those amnesty meetings at St. Helens, in Lancashire, in May, he set before Parnell his whole plan for "a more combative Irish representation in the House of Commons, backed by an organised, semi-revolutionary agitation in Ireland." Davitt still had hopes that the revolutionaries, who had by this time elected him on their Supreme Council, would consent to take the lead in the movement. He therefore pressed Parnell to join the Brotherhood, but without taking the "silly oath of secrecy": Davitt, like Brutus, held that a man

who could not be trusted without the guarantee of an oath could not be regarded as any more secure with that security superadded. The full plan as it then shaped itself in Davitt's mind comprised a small secret organisation, which would continue the work of collecting arms, but instead of distributing them to be lost or seized would store them up to await the favourable moment. This part of the scheme was afterwards dropped, in consequence of the unqualified refusal of the revolutionaries to have anything to do with Davitt's plan—a circumstance which he came to recognise as extremely fortunate for its success. There was next the scheme of open agitation of the land question on advanced radical lines, together with support of the labourers' claims, the abolition of the workhouse system, and the capture of the municipalities for Nationalism by the active participation in local affairs of the men who had hitherto held aloof on principle. When this organisation was complete enough to give the combative Irish party a sense of power behind them, a formal demand was to be made for repeal of the Union; and if this ultimatum were refused, the members were to withdraw from Westminster and form themselves, with the aid of a nation which at this point would be not merely aroused but armed by the revolutionaries, into "an informal legislative assembly." War was the *ultima ratio* of the plan in its original form.

But Parnell would have nothing to do with the plan. Its revolutionary and its democratic aspects

alike repelled his cold, cautious, conservative mind. He was too firm a believer in parliamentary action to realise, as Davitt realised, that the most admirable parliamentary party was quite powerless without the support of an organised country. He had nothing to offer Davitt as an alternative save to foreshadow such a very vigorous and successful course of action on the part of the members of Parliament as might serve to reconcile to parliamentary action those who, like Davitt, mistrusted (and not without reason, Parnell admitted) the efficacy of that form of agitation. As for retiring from Westminster—that he would only consider if the party was expelled from the House altogether.

It was undoubtedly fortunate that Parnell did not fall in more readily with Davitt's views at this particular juncture. Delay gave the originator of the plan time to furbish it up, to remove the weak portions, and to begin to carry into execution, himself, the remainder—with such effect that Parnell found it necessary to step into the movement, put himself at the head of it, and lend it his name. For the great and successful political agitation which will live in history as the "Parnell Movement" had Michael Davitt for its originating brain and pulsating heart.

The seed sown in Dartmoor had yet to be transplanted to America and there fostered in a congenial climate before it could with safety be transferred to the open in Ireland. A journey to the United States, to visit his mother and other relatives, had naturally been one of Davitt's earliest plans on

leaving Dartmoor. Towards the end of July he set out on this first of his many journeys to America. The visit proved to be of much more momentous consequence than a mere visit to friends. Armed with a few letters of introduction, and speedily extending his circle of acquaintances beyond these, Davitt laid the foundations of that immense popularity in America, both among the Irish and among the native Americans, which endured, with some vicissitudes, to the day of his death. Amongst the earliest friends he made was Patrick Ford, the editor of the *Irish World*, then and ever since the chief representative of the "advanced" section of American Irishmen. Among the last people he met before returning to Europe was Henry George.

The influence of the single-tax apostle on Davitt has sometimes been exaggerated. To say that Davitt was George's most distinguished convert, as has been said, is to belittle unduly Davitt's capacity for original thought. He was a land nationaliser before ever he met Henry George or heard of his book. Among the host of thought-phagocytes that helped his active mind to hold its own against the bacilli of Dartmoor, a distinct place had been taken by the conviction that the land, being a thing prior to all human life or cultivation, could not in equity be owned by individuals in the sense in which a spade, say, can be owned by the man who makes it. If the charge of the land is specially entrusted to any man or set of men, it can only be enjoyed by them within the limits of that term—held in trust for the good of the com-

munity as a whole, and subject to such restrictions and conditions as the community, in the person of the State, may think fit or find it necessary to impose. This doctrine linked itself closely in Davitt's mind with the facts of the peculiar origin of Irish landlordism. The Brehon Laws of ancient Ireland regulated the ownership of land according to this very system of trusteeship, while the conquering English had confiscated the land of the Tribe on the assumption—convenient, if not sincere—that it was the private property of the Chief. The manner in which the two ideas became inseparably associated in Davitt's mind typifies a condition of thought which was almost universal with him, which indubitably formed an essential part of his greatness, and which places him in the direct line of political evolution—I mean his union of general ideas with particular patriotism. He neither spent himself on vague dreams of world-wide reform while neglecting the work lying to hand in Ireland, nor did he ever allow the special circumstances of his native land to obscure the broad lines on which, subject only to local modifications in detail, progress must march towards its universal goal. In theory, it seems impossible that any sincerely progressive statesman should fail to adopt this attitude. In practice, the difficulty is to find one who does not turn his back on it. In this, as in so much else, Davitt will stand as the pioneer and model of Irish statesmen of the future.

The influence of Henry George on Davitt

was of the same character as that exercised by Lalor — corroborative, not stimulative; or if stimulative, then to growth and definition, not to germination, of idea. His influence was so much the more important than Lalor's inasmuch as it was that of a living teacher and friend, not merely that of a book; also it came earlier in point of time. But it must not be forgotten in this connection that Lalor was one of the indirect influences which George drew upon.

The views on the land question at which Davitt had now arrived, and which he preached during his tour in America, may be found summarised in the resolution on the subject endorsed by the Boston meeting which concluded his tour:—

> "A demand for the immediate improvement of the Irish land system by such a thorough change as would prevent the peasantry from being further victimised by landlordism. . . . This change to lead up to a system of small proprietorship similar to what at present obtains in France, Belgium, and Prussia. Such land to be *purchased or held* directly from the State. The State to buy out the landlords and to fix the cultivators in the soil."

While this leaves open the alternatives of peasant proprietorship and complete nationalisation, it is clearly already far ahead of the mild programme of land reform advocated at the time by Butt and his followers. Their platform comprised simply the "Three F's"—Fair Rents, Fixity of Tenure, and Free Sale. Davitt from the first would be satisfied with nothing less than the total abolition

of landlordism, not any mere mitigation of its evils. As to the system which was to succeed it, while definitely preferring land nationalisation, he was prepared to accept a scheme of peasant proprietorship should the opinion of the country be unable (as he feared, and as indeed it proved) to follow him to the full length of his theories. Parnell, be it noted, had no advanced views on the land question at all, and even after the first months of the Land League's triumphant progress was desirous to put forward Butt's scheme as his parliamentary policy.

The Boston meeting, at which the resolution above quoted was adopted, was held on 8th December 1878, as the term and climax of a series of meetings in which Davitt had been propagating the "New Departure" throughout the United States. He had commenced by delivering a lecture at Philadelphia, near which city his family then resided; and his success as a lecturer being even greater in America than in England, he arranged a regular tour. The American love of lectures is notorious, and Davitt was just the man to captivate his audiences. He was always at his best on the lecture platform, speaking far better than he wrote. When he took pen in hand, he was best in simple narrative, especially of events which he had himself witnessed; otherwise, his never-resting pen was apt to hurry him into a style at times journalistically bald and at others laboriously turgid. But for his speeches and, above all, for his lectures, he made careful preparation, taking the greatest

pains to be lucid and persuasive. A collection of his speeches and lectures, besides forming an epitome of the history of Ireland for nearly thirty years, would be a treasury of cogent argument on the various phases of the Irish question and on many great modern problems which are felt keenly in all lands. But the appearance of the speaker enhanced markedly the effect of his words. The large eyes, now keen and penetrating, now soft and tender, as he contemplated suffering or hardship, and again glowing with enthusiasm or indignation; the leonine head, the clear-cut countenance, set in a frame of coal-black hair, and withal the eloquent silence of the empty sleeve, showing where the cruel order of existing society had put its destroying mark upon his brawny frame—all this combined with his deep, rich voice to make a singularly impressive picture of strength and gentleness, of love for humanity and zeal to right its wrongs.

Davitt found it much easier to gain converts to his proposals in America than he had found it at home. The mass of Irish Americans, disgusted with the apparently hopeless state of things in Ireland, had sunk into apathy, taking no interest in either the constitutional or the revolutionary movement. They were therefore ready to welcome a plan which seemed at last to offer a prospect of something being done for their old country, and their American training made them eager to embrace the democratic ideas which lay at the root of the scheme. Two men so opposite in

general views as John Boyle O'Reilly, ex-Fenian convict, but now a representative of the Catholic and Conservative elements in Irish - American society, and John Devoy, " one of the most restlessly daring and resourceful of the Fenian leaders," were among the earliest adherents of the new policy. Devoy liked it so much that he made a premature attempt, while Davitt was away west, to carry it on a stage. He sent a cable to Kickham, to be forwarded to Parnell if the recipient approved. This message has sometimes been considered as the starting-point of the New Departure movement; in reality, it only showed at once Devoy's eagerness to take a leading part in that movement and his misapprehension of what precisely Davitt proposed. It was a definite offer of an alliance between the American Fenians and Parnell—a sufficiently startling proposition to send openly along the wires, and to publish, as it was shortly published, in the press. Davitt treats it as an illustration of " Irish conspiracy as she is made " ; and Parnell, when it was brought to his notice, took no action of any kind with reference to it. It was the unauthorised act of a well-meaning busybody, and by the denunciation which it evoked went far towards spoiling Davitt's plans. The sending of the cable, however, was significant of the effect that Davitt's propaganda had already produced in America, inasmuch as Devoy had been bitterly attacking the Parnell party less than a year previously. It should also be said, that later on, when he more fully understood Davitt's ideas, Devoy lent valuable assistance

in carrying them into execution, and accomplished much in the direction of winning over American Fenians to the new programme—services which Davitt fully and gratefully acknowledges in his *Fall of Feudalism*, in spite of the hostility subsequently manifested towards him by Devoy.

The policy which Davitt propounded throughout this American tour was eminently a humanitarian and practical reform policy. In his final speech at Boston he sketched, in an eloquent passage, the hard life of a tiller of the soil weighed down by the burden of landlordism, and showed how impossible, how inhuman it was to expect a man so situated to risk his neck on the scaffold, which meant at the same time risking, nay ensuring, the workhouse for his wretched family.

"If the Nationalists want [the Irish farmer] to believe in, and labour a little for, independence, they must first show themselves desirous and strong enough to stand between [him] and the power which a single Englishman wields over him" (Boston Speech, 8th December 1878).

He exhorted the two chief sections of Irishmen to make of this land question, linked with other practical schemes for the benefit of the nation, a common platform on which they could work together. He urged the importance of participating in every sphere of Irish life, and making national ideas prepotent therein. He pointed to the enormous effect such an organised and united body of public opinion could not fail to have, and the fair prospects which it would open up for the cause of national

liberty by the concentration of "international interest in a renascent people who can exert a powerful influence over the destiny of a declining empire."

In December, almost immediately after the Boston meeting, Davitt sailed for home. The reception which his proposals had been accorded in America, and the publication of the Devoy cable, had meantime initiated a lively discussion of the whole subject in the Irish press. The moderate Nationalist or constitutionalist papers welcomed the New Departure as evidence of a more reasonable state of mind on the part of the extremists and as opening the way to general co-operation of all national forces. On the other hand, the bitterest opponent of the new policy was Pigott, who both in and out of his paper denounced the promoters of co-operation with Parliamentarians as unprincipled and anti-national, assailing Davitt and Devoy with peculiar vehemence. Parnell, on his side, was beginning to give more attention to the potentialities of a land agitation as a political weapon. He of course regarded it in purely an opportunist light, without any of the true humanitarian feeling which to Davitt made it seem worth while to do something for the miserable peasants, even should his fond hopes of their subsequent devotion to the national cause not be fulfilled. Many prominent Fenians, too, Egan and Brennan being the most notable, as well as the men of revolutionary stamp who had already enabled Parnell to capture the Home Rule Confederation

of Great Britain from Butt, were speedily brought round to the new policy in spite of Pigott's ravings.

It was in a hopeful spirit, then, that Davitt and Devoy, who came to Europe shortly after him, proceeded to lay their proposals before the Supreme Council of the Fenian body. But their hopes were doomed to disappointment ; at neither of the two meetings of the Council which discussed the matter could they win a single recruit to their cause. The revolutionary leaders had too deeply inrooted in them the distrust of Parliamentarianism in the abstract which Davitt's breadth of mind had enabled him to brush aside as an unjustifiable prejudice. Moreover, the radical aspect of Davitt's plan did not appeal to their narrow minds. They were Nationalists of the old school (destined to be killed throughout Europe, by the shock of the international labour movement), to whom the raising of social questions seemed either irrelevant or even harmful, inasmuch as it tended to divide their ideal nation in the face of the enemy. They could not perceive that the homogeneous nation of their dreams, if it ever had any existence other than that of a metaphysical abstraction, had certainly no application to the nations of the nineteenth century, all torn, and Ireland most of all, by the internecine conflict of the Haves and the Have-nots. They could not conceive that an Irishman, unless as a temporary weakness to be mastered as speedily as possible, could have a stronger sense of injustice as against his landlord than against his country's oppressor ; they would

have stared if told that the war of classes sprang from a deeper and more vital principle of human nature than the war of nations. Such an idea was too revolutionary for them; and although they left Davitt and Devoy at liberty to carry on their new movement, they would not consent to take any share in the work.

Keenly disappointed as he was at the failure of the Fenian leaders to rise to the possibilities of the situation, Davitt nevertheless proceeded with his work. The early months of 1879 he devoted to an investigation on the spot of the condition of the west. In company with Mr. John W. Walshe of Balla, County Mayo, he went through practically the whole of Mayo and considerable portions of Galway. Walshe was a commercial traveller, and an excellent cicerone, as he was well acquainted with the people and the leading men in each locality. Davitt found all thoughtful people in a condition of intelligent anxiety as to the prospect of the farmers in the coming season. Two bad harvests had reduced them to the lowest straits; there was every prospect of a third, which would ruin them; their credit with the shopkeepers was almost exhausted; and the rack-renters were pressing them as remorselessly as ever for their pound of flesh. The time was ripe for a great land agitation. Everywhere he went Davitt sought out the local Fenians and tried to induce them to co-operate in his plans; in most cases he was successful in obtaining their promise of assistance. In the sequel, the former

Fenians proved the backbone of the new land campaign.

Those "natural leaders of the people," the priests, were, with few exceptions, doing nothing to help the struggling peasantry. They were plainly prepared to repeat their action in the days of the Great Famine, when they exhorted the people to starve if need be, but in any case to pay their rents with the utmost scrupulosity. With the memory of what he had heard of the famine days burning in his soul, Davitt was determined that there should be no repetition of its worst feature—the slavishness of the people. It is too little understood by young Irishmen at the present day (a tacit conspiracy of silence being entered into about it) that the Land League movement as founded by Davitt had an anti-clerical as well as an anti-landlord aspect. For the horrors of the famine, not the landlord alone, but the priest and the landlord combined, were responsible; and Davitt was determined that these horrors should not occur again. A passage from his *Fall of Feudalism* sets in a clear light his attitude towards the clergy on this point:—

"The lupine conduct of the Irish landlords . . . may be urged, in truth and in reprobation, but it neither explains nor extenuates nor excuses in any way the wholesale cowardice of the men who saw food leave the country in ship-loads, and turned and saw their wives and little ones sicken and die, and who 'bravely paid their rent' before dying themselves. What was the explanation of this inhuman spirit of social suicide? It is a serious question to

answer, but I firmly believe the answer to be this: During the tithe war of the thirties the peasantry were organised to resist the payment of these penal levies upon Catholics. Tithes were a combined injustice upon both priests and people, and there was a tacit, if unacknowledged, co-operation between the spirit of Whiteboyism and of the anti-tithe combinations in the conflict against the laws responsible alike for wrongs inflicted on the peasantry both as Catholics and tenants. . . . No sooner was an end put to the tithe war than the usual denunciations of secret societies, of Whiteboyism, of Ribbonism, and of every combination of an illegal kind or character, was recommenced in pastoral letters, from altars, and from the O'Connell platforms. To war against tithes was righteous and legitimate. To continue the combat against landlordism and unjust rent would do injury to Catholic as well as to Protestant interests, and this was a moral abomination, 'a violation of Catholic doctrine,' and all the rest . . . The responsibility for what followed—for the holocaust of humanity which landlordism and English rule exacted from Ireland in a pagan homage to an inhuman system—must be shared between the political and spiritual governors of the Irish people in those years of a measureless national shame. One power ruled the material interests of the people, the other their religious and moral convictions. Both authorities preached law and order—one by coercion, soldiers, police, and evictions; the other in homilies, sermons, and denunciation. Both, too, agreed in fathering upon the Almighty the cause of the famine. It was the visitation of God! . . . No more horrible and atheistic blasphemy was ever preached to a Christian people than this; and . . . one can well understand now how and why it was that myriads of human

beings, into whose souls this moral poison had been instilled, should have lain down and died, 'in obedience to the will of God,' after having 'bravely paid their rent.' . . . There were a few disturbances, . . . in most of which clergymen distinguished themselves by 'restraining the people,' thereby earning the special thanks of the Lord Lieutenant of the time for their services to 'law and order.'"

Davitt was a hater of shams and cant. He was busily engaged all his life in tearing the mask off the many impostures which beset Ireland, from the sham fight of secret conspiracy to the "Irish-Ireland" cant of our own time. The "priests and people" cant—one of the most deadly of all—has rarely been so trenchantly exposed as in the above indictment. The truth is that in Ireland, as elsewhere, despite all praters to the contrary, the ecclesiastical order, as such, has never been in sympathy with the populace, as such. Whenever the priests cordially united with the people, it was because clerical interests were directly concerned, not because of genuine popular sympathies. Through all the fight for Catholic emancipation, naturally, the priests were at the head of the people; and in every struggle where they may hope or be certain to gain as an order, from the tithe war to the university agitation, we find them actively exerting themselves in favour of reform. All popular movements *not* purely Catholic, on the other hand, they have invariably opposed as long as they dared. If such a movement grew too

strong for them, they then flung themselves into it with a view to capturing it and diverting it to their own ends. Such brilliant exceptions as Archbishop Croke can no more redeem the clerical class from this stigma than the name of Parnell can redeem landlordism. Thus it was quite in the normal course of things that the preliminary rumblings of the Land League movement should be noted with apprehension by the clergy. Many of them were the intimate friends of landlords, some were landlords themselves.

Amongst the latter class was Canon Geoffrey Burke, parish priest of Irishtown, a little village near Claremorris, County Mayo. He had at the beginning of 1879 become the owner of a small estate in the neighbourhood as heir to a deceased brother. The character of his rental may be judged from the fact that subsequently the Land Commission, under the Act of 1881, assessed the fair rent at less than half what Canon Burke was trying to squeeze out of his tenants in 1879. These excessive rents, it is true, had originally been imposed, not by the Canon, but by his deceased brother. On coming into the property, Canon Burke found all the tenants in arrear; and he promptly showed his sense of the situation by threatening the unfortunate people with eviction unless the whole of the arrears were paid. Payment was utterly impossible; even such rent as the tenants could manage to pay was only scraped together with the aid of remittances from America. The case was an exceptionally hard one; but no

one would take it up, because the landlord was a priest. The local press, nominally on the side of the tenants, would not even give the sufferers in this particular case a hearing in its columns. No alternative save America (if they could raise their passage money) or the workhouse seemed open to the Irishtown tenantry.

This distressing instance of conscienceless landlordism came to Davitt's ears in April 1879. Another man might have hesitated about taking it up, or at least about taking it up first. The wiseacres who continually point out paths of least resistance (leading nowhere, as a rule) would have shaken their heads over his folly. To attack a priest in the first instance would assuredly bring down a storm of clerical opposition; whereas, if some other case were judiciously selected—where the landlord was a Protestant, say, and an active proselytiser—the hearty support of the priests could probably be obtained. Such considerations had no weight whatever with Davitt; the parade of "prudence," "tact," and so forth, as veils for cowardice was foreign to his nature. Here was a case of flagrant injustice; he would set himself to right it at once, be the wrong-doer who he might. He suggested to his Mayo friends the holding of a great public meeting at Irishtown, to denounce Canon Burke and landlordism in general. He was to procure the speakers and draft the resolutions, while the local men made the other arrangements. They agreed; and on Sunday, 20th April, the meeting was held at Irishtown as arranged.

From the flinty heart of Canon Burke a spark had been struck which was to wrap all Ireland in conflagration. The New Departure was an accomplished fact; the Land League had arrived.

CHAPTER V

THE LAND LEAGUE

"No party has the right to call itself a national party which neglects resorting to all and every justifiable means to end the frightful misery under which our people suffer" (Boston Speech, 8th December 1878).

DAVITT had all the qualities of a great organiser. He had not merely energy and enthusiasm, but that more elusive quality which alone enables its possessor to command groups of men and to unite them into a homogeneous organisation. All his powers in this direction were exercised on the grand scale in the months which followed the Irishtown meeting. That meeting was a tremendous success. Attended by fully seven thousand men, with a large "cavalry" contingent, it was an extraordinary testimony to the keenness of insight which had led Davitt to the conclusion that the land question was the true key of the Irish situation. The speakers, invited by Davitt, were Messrs. Brennan, O'Connor Power, John Ferguson, Louden, and Daly. Davitt himself was not present; but he sent the resolutions, which at once struck the keynote of the whole subsequent campaign. They passed far beyond the moderate land reform programme with which Butt (and Parnell too) had till that time been satisfied, and

declared uncompromisingly for the complete abolition of the landlord system. The speakers differed in their proposals—or suggestions, rather—for the replacement of the doomed system: Brennan, always the nearest of the Land Leaguers to Davitt's position, adumbrated land nationalisation; Ferguson, dealing with the problem from the too often overlooked standpoint of the town dweller, dealt with the taxation of land values; while O'Connor Power, more moderate than the others, even though he went beyond his parliamentary colleagues (he was then member for Mayo), advocated peasant proprietorship. Besides the general principles laid down, there was a fearless demand for immediate reductions of rent by the local landlords.

The meeting was successful in both its objects. As everyone knows, it initiated the general Land League movement; but it could not have done that if it had not at once showed the power inherent in such determined demonstrations by securing an important concession from the man at whom it was directly aimed. Canon Burke promptly decided that he could not afford to defy the people. The most potent of the commandments, "Thou shalt not be found out," had in his case been broken; he was exposed in public as a rack-renter; and, no longer able to count on the immunity of the cloth, he deemed it wiser to give in. Yielding to a display of force what Christian feeling or charity had failed to draw from him, he reduced his rents by 25 per cent.—not enough to render them just, as the Land Commission's decision showed some years after-

wards, but enough to enable the tenants to make yet another struggle for existence. Enough, too, to teach the lesson to others similarly situated: Go thou and do likewise. But the audacity of the attack on a priest roused the anger of the dominant clerical caste. Who were these common folk, that they should raise their voices against one of the all-privileged order? The Mayo altars rang with denunciation of the disrespect shown to the clergy by such gatherings. The Dublin papers took no sort of notice of the meeting. Davitt and his friends went on their way undisturbed by either clerical censure or journalistic suppression.

Davitt took occasion to see Parnell soon after the Irishtown meeting, and told him all about his plans for the spread of the agitation in the west. He strongly urged Parnell to put himself at the head of the new movement, assuring him of its success and of certain aid from America if he would do so. Parnell was interested, but still hesitant. He doubted the wisdom of openly opposing the clergy, and he feared the dominance of the revolutionary element. On hearing, however, that the official Fenian leaders would have nothing to do with the movement, while the rank and file could be relied on to support him pretty generally in their individual capacities, he saw that, instead of his being captured by the Fenians, his entry into the fray would virtually mean that he would capture them for the aggressive wing of the constitutional movement. This, as he had previously told Davitt plainly enough, was just what he was at the time

anxious to do. He therefore yielded to Davitt's entreaties, and consented to attend the second meeting which Davitt was then planning—that fixed for 8th June, at Westport. This promise marked the definite entry of Parnell into the militant land agitation—to lend it the prestige already his in virtue of the obstructive policy; to invest it with whatever distinction that policy had yet to confer on him; to transmute the enormous energy it was to generate into a parliamentary force, and therewith to drive the constitutional locomotive nearer to its objective than it ever before had reached; but also to oust from the movement the controlling hand and to a large extent the ideas of its founder, to link it instead with his own personal fortunes, and to compromise it in his fall.

The Westport meeting, like that at Irishtown, was circumstantially a protest against clerical dictation as well as against landlordism. The Archbishop of Tuam fulminated against the intended meeting in the columns of the *Freeman's Journal* the day previous. The familiar phraseology of the ecclesiastic who wishes to utilise the cry of "religion" for secular purposes rang through the letter. "Profanation of what is most sacred in religion,"—"impiety and disorder in Church and society,"—"unhallowed combinations . . . organised by a few designing men,"—these are some of the flowers of speech imported by His Grace of Tuam into his attack upon the tenants' protest against rack-rents and evictions. Parnell was said to have

"unwittingly" consented to attend; the main purport of the letter obviously was to frighten him from doing so. But the Archbishop mistook his man. That indomitable pride, the source of Parnell's greatness and of his ruin, forbade him to yield to this insolent dictation. He did not hesitate a moment. Davitt, who hastened to him in fear lest he might think of backing out, found him absolutely unmoved by the Archbishop's letter, and quite unshaken in his resolve to attend the Westport meeting as arranged. "This was superb," writes Davitt in his *Fall of Feudalism.* "I have always considered it the most courageously wise act of his whole political career."

The spirit displayed by the Mayo men in turning out to the number of some eight thousand in defiance of the Archbishop's opposition showed Parnell that he had taken the prudent as well as the bold course. Encouraged by their numbers and enthusiasm, he took a strong line, and gave the people the famous watchword, "Hold a firm grip of your homesteads." Davitt, too, gave the people a watchword,—more general and less generally appreciated than Parnell's,—"The land for the people." After this the agitation spread rapidly throughout the county of Mayo and into the neighbouring counties of Galway and Sligo. The attention of the Dublin press was secured by the adhesion of Parnell. Men of all ranks and of all shades of Nationalism came rapidly into the new movement. Mr. John Dillon was among the first thus to associate himself with the campaign. Constitutionalists began to see that

the new movement was taking the ground from under their feet, and that they must either associate themselves with it or fight it. Prominent Fenians like Messrs. Egan, Brennan, and Harris, were among the most active agents in the organising work, the guiding spirit of which, however, Davitt continued to be. The clerical hostility which still pursued the movement was specially directed at Davitt. The Archbishop of Tuam wrote another letter directed at Davitt, though not naming him, in July. The occasion was the summoning of a meeting for moderate land reform, organised as a counterblast to the Davitt meetings, and attended by the Catholic and Conservative wing of the Home Rule party. Davitt, who was contemptuously referred to in this letter as an "unknown, strolling man," wrote a scathing reply, in the course of which he took occasion to refer to some of his claims on the confidence of the Irish people:—

"As one who has taken part in the meetings to which His Grace refers, I beg respectfully to say that I am neither an unknown nor a strolling man in the west. . . . Some twenty-five years ago my father was evicted from a small holding near the parish of Straide, in Mayo, because unable to pay a rent which the crippled state of his resources, after struggling through the famine years, rendered impossible. Trials and sufferings in exile for a quarter of a century, in which I became physically disabled for life, a father's grave dug beneath American soil, myself the only member of the family ever destined to live or die in Ireland, this privilege existing only by virtue of 'ticket-of-leave,' are the

consequences which followed that eviction. . . . As for any . . . advancement on the people's shoulders, the only one I am likely to obtain by their patronage will be in the direction of oakum-picking in Millbank, or stone-breaking in Dartmoor Convict Prison; preferments which, with their indignities and suffering, I am in a fair way of being convinced, are more easily borne than the imputations, insults, and injuries which the participant in Irish politics receives for his endeavours."

Like many other passages in Davitt's writings, this letter shows that, if he was prepared to endure in a good cause the attacks of deliberate hostility or ignorant misapprehension, it was not because he did not feel such attacks keenly. He was not gifted with that thick skin which enables some politicians to throw off such attacks as a rhinoceros does bullets, experiencing at most but a pleasantly ticklish sensation. On the contrary, Davitt was a man of an acutely sensitive, highly strung disposition; peculiarly susceptible, therefore, to be wounded by the accusations which were hurled upon him, by one section or another, at different times in his career. His courage in facing political storms is all the more remarkable. Nor is it to be wondered at that occasionally his sensibility should have been stung into a retort too sharp, a reproach too bitter. It is not without significance that the word "irritability" has been chosen by biologists to denote the first symptom and the chief measure of life. The marvel is, not that Davitt should have been occasionally betrayed into sharp speech, but that his

writings and speeches should be so generally marked as they are by an urbanity and good temper which sprang, not from indifference, but from the iron control of a powerful will over a highly responsive nervous organisation.

The dignified and manly tone of this reply to Archbishop M'Hale, as scrupulously courteous as it was unflinching in the attitude it took up, created a marked impression, and contributed to make arrogant ecclesiastics chary about attacking for the future a man who cared so little for their pretensions to govern the action of their spiritual flock in temporal matters. Nor did the letter stand alone as a protest against the Archbishop's attitude. A meeting was at once arranged for Tuam, within sight of the Archbishop's palace; and there a huge gathering of Mayo men and Galway men let His Grace know plainly that they would not tolerate such interference as he had been guilty of. That meeting, suggested and organised by Davitt, marked a turning-point in the attitude of the clergy towards the land movement. The frontal attack had failed; subtler methods must now be used. Those bishops and priests who were most hostile found it necessary to veil their dislike. Those priests who had really popular sympathies (there are always a few such to be found—the exceptions who are too often regarded as the type) were now able to enter the movement with less dread of ecclesiastical censure from their superiors. Later on, when the Land League had grown to its full gigantic stature, many other clergymen joined

it in a spirit anything but sympathetic, for the purpose of wresting it to their own ends.

As yet, there was no such thing as a "Land League." Davitt and his friends, with the assistance of local committees in the spots where it was deemed advisable to hold meetings, managed the whole affair without any formal organisation. In such an embryonic stage, however, Davitt's architectonic mind could not long be content to leave the agitation. He wanted to see a regular organisation formed, which might control the whole movement and spread it to the four corners of Ireland. Again and again he pressed Parnell to co-operate in the formation of such an organisation. As at every step in these early days of the "Parnell Movement," it was Davitt who was the moving force, Parnell the restraining and moderating one. He objected, he said, to large and unwieldy associations, which would inevitably embrace considerable numbers of injudicious and unmanageable people, for whose rash deeds they in the central committees would be held responsible. Having no spark of democratic instinct, the counterbalancing advantages of such an organised popular mass as Davitt contemplated had no attractions for him. Another factor in his reluctance to take this step was his desire not to offend the members of the "Tenants' Defence Associations" with whom he had till that time been acting, and whose organisations would be superseded by the proposed new League. Davitt saw that if the effect of these

forces on Parnell was to be neutralised, it must be by creating a stronger force on the other side. He accordingly founded, in August, the Land League of Mayo, an association or federation of the various local committees already formed for the defence of the tenants and the promotion of the active agitation in the different parts of the county. Its first plank was the complete abolition of landlordism ; its second, the procuring of such temporary ameliorations in the position of the tenants as was possible while they remained such.

Mayo was now completely organised ; demands for speakers and other assistance began to pour in upon the League from many other parts of the country. Those districts which would not associate themselves directly with the fierce fighters of the west began nevertheless almost unconsciously to grow bolder in their tone and to put fresh vigour into the action of the local defence associations. The demands upon the time and energies of the leaders, especially upon Davitt himself, were very great. Money, too, began to be lacking at this stage. Local committees could usually be got to defray the direct expenses of meetings, but the travelling expenses of the speakers, most of them poor men, formed a heavy item ; and the need was also felt of some expenditure on literature if the League was to be properly understood and to make due headway outside its native county. Davitt, who had commenced in America to support himself as a newspaper correspondent, had expended on the originating work of the League nearly all the

money produced by his lecturing tour in the States —the earliest instance of that disinterestedness which made him ever ready to devote his private funds to the propagation of the causes he had at heart. He now thought of starting on another lecturing tour for the purpose of raising money for the work of the League. There was abundant material upon which to address the Irish Americans, in the upheaval that had already been brought about as the result of his labours. He accordingly wrote to Dr. William Carroll, one of the friends who had helped to organise his former tour, setting out the situation and his need of money to promote the work he had initiated, and asking him if he could assist him in organising a second and more extensive lecturing tour. This letter had important consequences; it is therefore necessary to observe that it was not a request for money, but only that he might be put in the way of earning some on the lecture platform. Davitt communicated at the same time and in the same sense with a few other friends in other American cities, including Mr. Patrick Ford of the *Irish World* and Mr. John Devoy. The reply, when it came, was in the form of a draft for over £400. Davitt's friends had decided to send him the money for this national purpose at once; and they had procured it as a loan from a fund which had been started under the name of the "Skirmishing Fund," but afterwards known as the "National Fund," and contributed for general national purposes. These purposes had originally included, in the days of desperation,

the perpetration of dynamite outrages in Great Britain. No doubt it could still be fairly said that some at least of the money had been subscribed with a distinct view to the perpetration of such outrages, though the fund had by this time been diverted from that purpose and had altered its name accordingly. Davitt, on receiving this money, decided that he might accept it, and did so. He subsequently came to think that this was a blunder. Tactically it may have been, but it must be evident that no shadow of moral blame can attach to Davitt for his acceptance. Even if the money had been all subscribed for outrage, his diversion of it to better and saner objects could only be to his credit. But it did him harm for a time after it was made public—for of course it was made public, like every other "secret" in the possession of the New York conspirators. Accusations that the Land League had been founded with "Skirmishing" money, and was therefore tainted with a criminal origin, began to appear in the press. When Davitt learned the whole circumstances, he announced his intention of regarding the sum sent him as a personal debt; and he paid off the whole of it in two instalments, in 1880 and in 1882. Parnell, who heard of this during his visit to America, wanted Davitt to allow himself to be recouped out of the League funds; but this, with that exceeding delicacy in respect of money which always marked him, Davitt refused to do, notwithstanding the fact that he had spent the money on paying the expenses of speakers and on the

dissemination of literature in connection with the Land League. This whole affair was raked up at the *Times* Commission, and futile attempts made to fasten charges of criminality on Davitt and the League in respect of it.

About a month after the formation of the Land League of Mayo, Parnell at last allowed himself to be persuaded by Davitt to consent to the establishment of a central national body to control the whole agitation. A manifesto, drafted by Davitt, was issued, defining the aims of the League; and a conference was summoned for the 21st of October. At this the Land League of Mayo was merged in the Land League of Ireland. Parnell was elected President, and representatives of the Tenants' Defence Associations, of whom the most notable was Mr. A. J. Kettle, already a prominent figure in the western campaign, were associated with the original Land Leaguers in the management of the organisation. The programme and constitution of the new League differed in some respects from that of the pioneer body; the assistance of the more moderate section was not to be obtained without certain concessions, both open and imperceptible. The Mayo League, for example, had put the abolition of landlordism first on its programme, and the amelioration of the tenants' lot second. The Land League of Ireland retained these two objects, but inverted their order, placing them in order of practicability, not of ultimate value. Moreover, "the ownership of the soil by the occupiers" was definitely inscribed

on the programme. Already there were signs that the movement was to pass from the hands of the practical idealist into those of the political opportunists. One valuable point, however, was gained by the extreme wing, in the insertion of a provision in the constitution of the League forbidding the allocation of any funds to the assistance of any parliamentary candidate. Parnell, naturally, objected strongly to this clause; and ultimately, when need arose for money to fight the General Election, the League so far trusted Parnell as to "lend" him certain moneys for election purposes.

Another of the decisions come to at this conference was that Parnell and Dillon should proceed at once to the United States, to enlist active support for the movement there. Their departure was, however, postponed by an incident which furnished the League with all it needed to ensure its rapid spread throughout the country—a Castle prosecution. Already the attention of the Government had been directed to the League; its third meeting had been the subject of debate in the House of Commons, on which occasion the Chief Secretary, Mr. James Lowther, had affected to make light of it, sneering at the promoters as "a convict at large on ticket-of-leave", and so forth. Now, however, the Government was beginning to get alarmed. The wet summer, from which the operations of the League had derived great advantage, had culminated, as expected, in a bad harvest and an imminent famine. The League was determined, under

Davitt's inspiration, that this time there should be no " brave " payment of rents by starving peasants. The advice tendered to the tenants was, to regard the landlord's claim upon them as the last in order of urgency, not under any circumstances to be paid until themselves and their families were first fed and clothed. The alarming knowledge that, in the presence of famine, this advice would be acted upon wherever the League had power, made it incumbent upon ministers to stop its spread in the interests of their friends the landlords. So, for speeches delivered on 2nd November, at Gurteen, County Sligo (being the first appearance of the League in that county), a prosecution was initiated against Davitt, Daly, and Killeen. Brennan was shortly afterwards included, in virtue of a speech made a few days later.

The prosecutions were timed so as to prevent, if possible, a meeting announced for the 23rd of November at Balla, in the presence of an evicting party. In this object the Castle miserably failed. Davitt was not there, it is true,—he and his two friends were securely lodged in Sligo jail,—but Parnell and Sexton went, at the risk of their lives (the police had orders to fire on *them* if there was any disturbance), held a magnificent meeting, and prevented the eviction. This was in pursuance of the plan originally laid down by Davitt—to see that every eviction should be carried out, if at all, in presence of an enormous crowd and to the accompaniment of spirited invective against landlord robbery. This interference with evictions,

like the interference with rent, struck at the root of landlord power, and excited more alarm than anything else could have done among the proprietorial class. In endeavouring to frustrate it, the Government had only succeeded in giving it an immense advertisement. But the advertisement was only commencing. The whole Sligo trials proved a huge farce, whereby the speeches complained of, with the League principles embodied in them, obtained the widest possible circulation. They were telegraphed by newspaper correspondents to all parts of the world; they roused the spirit of the people everywhere in Ireland to emulate the western upholders of the right to live. Every day, after the conclusion of the proceedings before the magistrates, there was a public meeting in Sligo, addressed by Parnell and Dillon, which contributed still more to the free advertisement. All the prisoners were, of course, returned for trial; but the prosecutions, after being first transferred to Dublin in the hope of finding a subservient jury there, were finally dropped early in 1880.

Meantime, Parnell and Dillon, after having delayed their departure for some weeks pending the conclusion of the Sligo proceedings, sailed for America at the end of the year, to make a veritable triumphal progress through the States and to pave the way for the definite establishment of an auxiliary League there. During their absence, the chief direction of the affairs of the League naturally devolved upon Davitt. He was indefatigable in organising, speaking, and writing, and

inspired all who came into contact with him with his own intense passion in the cause. He distributed a great deal of literature at this time, and both then and subsequently he disseminated the *Irish World* in large quantities throughout Ireland. The closest relations were always kept up between him and Ford, who was much more favourable to Davitt, throughout, than to Parnell. Davitt specially admired the *Irish World* for two things: its uncompromising attitude on the land question, and its inculcation of the gospel of manliness. The Irish peasant had grown to have many of the vices of the slave in his virtual serfdom; and from this servility towards landlord and bailiff Patrick Ford and the *Irish World* powerfully contributed to arouse him.

Amongst the propagandist literature written by Davitt himself at this time was a brochure called *Paudeen O'Rafferty's Commandments*, in which, under the form of a parody of the Ten Commandments, the whole doctrine of the Land League was succinctly expounded. This tract would hardly be worth mentioning were it not for the fact that Davitt, in his evidence before the *Times* Commission, expressed his regret for the form into which he had cast it; he did not, in his maturer judgment, think it right to parody the Commandments, even for such a sacred purpose as his was. Few will be found to share this excessive delicacy, but it deserves mention as illustrative of the deep strain of reverence which underlay the iconoclasm of this vehement combatant.

Suddenly the General Election of 1880 came upon the infant organisation. Parnell was at once wired for, and came home to stand for three constituencies, and to win them all. Davitt, as a ticket-of-leave man, was not qualified for a seat, and would not have accepted one in any case; but he was in the thick of the fight on behalf of the other candidates put forward by Parnell and the League. He had his first experience of being hissed by an Irish audience during this election, and felt it keenly. It was when he went, at Parnell's request, to Wexford, to organise a great demonstration in Enniscorthy as a counterblast to that at which Parnell had been silenced, assaulted, and nearly murdered in that town by certain of the extremists, headed this time by two priests. Davitt decided on the spot that it was better to hold no meeting, as bloodshed would be the result; while, in any case, the return of Parnell's candidates was certain. Parnell was displeased at Davitt's thus acting contrary to his instructions, "and for a time," writes Davitt, "attributed my action to other motives"—namely, to a secret intrigue with the extremists. But the satisfactory result of the poll showed that Davitt was right, and Parnell allowed himself to be appeased. The widely divergent natures of the two men were well illustrated in this incident: Parnell thinking first of a dramatic overthrow of those who had insulted him; Davitt anxious to put aside all thoughts of revenge or personal dignity (for he too had been insulted), but concentrating his attention on the essential,

the victory for the cause. Therein he found ample compensation for such trivialities as sorely wounded the proud soul of Parnell.

The sweeping triumphs of the Land League party at the elections cast upon its leaders the responsibility of mapping out a parliamentary campaign which might adequately express the feeling of the country. A conference was accordingly held, shortly after the election, to determine the policy in Parliament of the Irish party—for the elections had *ipso facto* deposed Shaw from the leadership of that party and put the Chairman of the Land League in his place. How much Parnell's pre-eminence was due to temperament and not to intellect was clearly shown by the futile character of the proposal which he submitted to the conference—namely, that Butt's Bill, which was merely a fixity of tenure scheme, should stand as their parliamentary policy. All the others rejecting this as inadequate, Parnell was easily brought to acquiesce in a scheme of land purchase to be aided by State credit—much such a scheme as, after over twenty years of strife of the most brutal character conducted against the Land Leaguers, was finally carried into law by the Tory Government. It proposed, however, to give the landlords twenty years' purchase; and Davitt, believing this figure to be too high, refused to sign the document which was issued embodying this proposal, with the names of Parnell, Egan, Louden, and Kettle attached. Despite his inability to agree with the others on this point, Davitt lent valuable aid in drafting

the details of the scheme, suggesting the incorporation in it of a plan for a permanent "Department of Land Administration," to manage the transfer of land from landlord to tenant—an anticipation, in fact, of the existing Estates Commissioners.

The conference ratifying this programme was followed by a public meeting in the Rotunda, Dublin, on 30th April. This meeting was attacked by some Fenians and nearly broken up. The leader of the interrupters attempted to move a resolution condemning the whole parliamentary movement, and by name attacking Davitt for assisting in its rejuvenescence. Davitt did his best, in the interests of free speech, to obtain a hearing for this man and resolution. Nevertheless, he was himself severely hustled in the scuffle that ensued, and knocked off the platform. Moreover, a few days afterwards he was expelled from the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., on which he had represented the north of England branches for a couple of years. After this he was regarded as an ordinary member of the rank and file of the organisation for some time, and in that capacity attended Clan-na-Gael "camps" in America, in pursuit of his campaign for the conversion of the extreme men to the support of the Land League movement. Ultimately, seeing the obvious desire of the narrow ring of Fenian leaders to be rid of him, he regarded himself as having ceased to belong to their body, and after 1882 never visited Clan-na-Gael camps.

The extension of the work in the United States required the most urgent attention at this juncture.

Parnell and Dillon had been interrupted in their organising labours by the advent of the General Election; it was now decided that Davitt should join Dillon, who was still in America, and put the movement upon a regular organised footing there. He accordingly sailed early in May, and attended the Trenor Hall Conference, New York, at which arrangements were made for the foundation of the American Land League. Its object was to act as an auxiliary to the home organisation, and to supply it with funds, which the poverty-stricken mother-country could not furnish for her own struggle in sufficient quantities. These funds, already inaugurated by Parnell, were twofold: one for the active support of the Land League's operations, the other for the relief of distress. The League had already achieved much in mitigation of the horrors of the famine of 1879; and not only had its own efforts been of great value, but by sounding the note of alarm it had forced the authorities, at first contemptuously bent on ignoring and denying the famine, to take cognizance of it. The moderate land reformers had done likewise, so that during the winter three relief funds had been in existence: the Land League Fund; the Mansion House Fund, started by Lord Mayor Dwyer Gray; and the Castle Fund, started by the Duchess of Marlborough, in the administration of which Lord Randolph Churchill learned something of the realities of Irish life. All this organised assistance to the starving peasantry was the direct result of the Land League agitation, which had awakened

the public conscience. The League, too, had at Davitt's suggestion introduced a new seed-potato, which did much for many years to avert the customary famines. The balance of the relief funds were ultimately applied to the relief of the evicted, those indirect victims of the famine.

The funds from America were already growing to an extent which foreshadowed their subsequent enormous proportions, and the first knotty point Davitt had to deal with in America was connected with them and their mode of transmission to Ireland. There were various theories as to how this transmission could best be effected: the Catholic and Conservative section of Irish-Americans, who now began to sweep into the League in great numbers, held that each local branch or committee should forward its subscriptions direct to Ireland; in this manner it was hoped somehow to keep a check on the application of the money, by bringing those who received it and those who subscribed it into direct communication. The extreme section, on the other hand, desired to have a central treasury created, through which all moneys must be sent to Ireland. They had good prospects, at the time, of being able to control this central treasury; and thus their views, as the persons from whom the money directly came, would be more powerful with the home organisation. Finally, there was the *Irish World* section, which desired to forward moneys through that influential newspaper. This last was the plan which Davitt would have preferred. Ford and himself were in close touch and sympathy; and

besides, the receipt of money through a newspaper would manifestly be more conducive to freedom in its employment, and less likely to impose irksome conditions on the home organisation, than either of the other methods proposed. A compromise was ultimately agreed upon, at Davitt's suggestion. A central treasury was formed, and in so far the extreme element was gratified; but the condition of the compact was that the Treasurer appointed should be a priest. The priest who was selected, the Rev. Lawrence Walsh, worked most harmoniously with Davitt, who himself was appointed Honorary Secretary of the organisation. It was agreed upon between them that they should advise the forwarding of funds through newspapers, Father Walsh recommending the *Irish World* and *Boston Pilot*, and Davitt recommending the *Irish World* alone. As a matter of fact, three-fourths of the money sent from America to the Land League came through the medium of Mr. Ford's powerful paper. This arrangement was the origin of the breach between Davitt and John Devoy, who saw in Davitt's proceedings on this point a surrender of the extremist position. The dominant position of the *Irish World*, however, and its influence over all classes of Irish-American readers, were ample justification for Davitt's action, as the sequel showed.

A tour all through the United States was Davitt's next task. He traversed the entire continent from New York to San Francisco and back again, visiting all the principal cities, establishing branches of the

Land League, speaking in public on the Irish situation, and in private using all his endeavours to bring the extremists into line with the New Departure. It was a most exhausting journey, and twice Davitt was attacked by fever and brought to the verge of death by his unsparing exertions on behalf of the cause. Nervous complaints, and insomnia in particular, also worried him almost continually. For one of these slighter ailments he was treated by Le Caron, or Beach, the British Government spy, who was then an active member of the extreme organisation and quite unsuspected. Davitt recalled this incident long afterwards, when Le Caron appeared as a witness for the *Times* in his true rôle, and added that he believed the spy's medicine had done him good !

Before returning to Ireland, Davitt had spread the Land League all over the vast continent, and had set the machinery working which was to ensure its further almost automatic extension. One important addition had been made to the original League programme in America—namely, the promotion of a revival of Irish industries. The American Leaguers, living in the midst of a great industrial country, were naturally more keenly alive to the importance of varied industries than those at home could well be. Davitt strongly approved of this development of the original idea, and when the National League subsequently succeeded the Land League, he saw to it that an industrial clause was included in its constitution.

Another American development was the Ladies'

Land League. This, the most important of all the developments of the original plan, was first suggested by Miss Fanny Parnell. This sister of Parnell's, who had a considerable share in making him a Nationalist, had all the vehement and intense passion of her brother, unmasked by his cold exterior and untarnished by his political opportunism. The fiery lava of Fanny Parnell's nature sprang straight from the volcanic depths of primitive passion; in her brother Charles, the surface coldness which was to eat into the heart had already set in. Fanny Parnell was the noblest and purest-minded patriot of the Parnell family; and had not her fiery soul "fretted the pigmy body to decay," and brought her to an untimely death, her genius might have won for her a place beside the Maid of Orleans among the liberating heroines of history.

In nothing have the Irish people, down to the present day, exhibited so much conservatism as in their attitude towards the citizenship of women. The general backwardness of the country, shut off by England from contact with all modern ideas; the predominance of the agricultural type of society, which is that least favourable to the recognition of women's rightful claims; and the ascendency of the clergy, always the most implacable foes of feminism—were among the contributory forces in impeding the progress of Irishwomen. Nor were the conditions under which the revolutionary conspiracies were conducted calculated to give women even there, in a sphere in which they have

always excelled, the opportunity of displaying their talents for the conduct of political revolutionary agitation. With the changed conditions introduced by the Land League movement, the moment had come when the services of women could be used to the greatest advantage in the agitation. Davitt was the only one of the Land League leaders who perceived this. He saw the possibilities inherent in the enlistment of women in the work; and on his return from America, in December, he discussed the question with another sister of Parnell's, Miss Anna Parnell, who was then resident in Ireland. Finding her enthusiastically in favour of the scheme, he then suggested the formation of a Ladies' Land League in Ireland. Egan was the sole supporter of the proposition; Parnell, Dillon, and Brennan opposed it strongly. They feared ridicule; they doubted the capacity of women for such work; they were imbued with the old "protective" idea of man's relation to woman, and objected to exposing women to the risk of imprisonment and calumny which they were quite prepared to run themselves. Davitt urged that there was no reason why women should not be allowed to show their devotion to their country in this manner if they chose; and that the odium of putting women into jail would fall on the Government, and would thus strengthen the Land League position. Ultimately, owing largely to the eagerness with which Miss Anna Parnell had fallen in with the project, Davitt got his way, and the

Ladies' Land League was established early in 1881. It was the most important step taken since the start of the movement; for it was the Ladies' Land League that beat down Forster. The Land League was the one national movement that recognised women and availed itself of their services as citizens, instead of shutting them out, like children, from the conduct of political business; and it was precisely to this exceptional attitude towards women that the Land League movement owed its exceptional success. When will present-day Irish leaders wake up to the significance of this fact, and realise that no modern movement can succeed which does not enlist the sympathy and the active support of the feminine half of humanity?

The establishment of the Ladies' Land League was one of the measures, and the most effective, adopted by the League to cope with the situation in which their contest with Forster, the Liberal Chief Secretary, had now landed them. Matters had progressed rapidly at home while Davitt was in the United States. The Compensation for Disturbance Bill, Forster's attempt to throw a drop of oil on the troubled waters, had been rejected by the House of Lords, the present Marquis of Lansdowne deserting his party in wrath at the proposal to interfere in the slightest degree with the sacred rights of property. The excellent harvest of 1880 had been largely "held," in obedience to the advice of the League and the stirring exhortations of its Sappho, Fanny Parnell. The ostracism of Captain Boycott had crystallised into a phrase the world-old

policy of the many in combat with the powerful few. The extreme wing of the Land League was steadily preparing the way for a general strike against rent. The Government was preparing to respond by coercion and the suppression of the League. As a first step, an attempt had been made to procure a conviction under the ordinary law. Sixteen of the most prominent Land Leaguers were prosecuted for conspiracy to prevent payment of rent, to prevent evictions, to prevent the letting of evicted farms, and to excite ill-will amongst Her Majesty's subjects. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. M'Cabe, who had once before denounced the League on the eve of the Sligo trials, managed to make another denunciation of it synchronise with this second prosecution, which was to be adjudicated upon by a Dublin jury. It was the news of these proceedings that brought Davitt home in haste from America, to take his share of the risks run by the leaders at home—risks greater in his case than in theirs, inasmuch as the Government could return a ticket-of-leave man to penal servitude without the formality of any trial at all.

Before the expected blow fell, Davitt performed one other important task besides establishing the Ladies' Land League. He had observed with grave concern the increase in outrages during the few months he had been in America, and resolved to throw himself into the work of putting an end to them. His humanitarian spirit was revolted by murders and by the mutilation of dumb animals,

and even while he recognised that the primary blame for these occurrences rested upon the system which had left the tortured peasantry no outlook save through the policy of revenge, he held strongly that one of the duties of the new movement was to teach the people a better way. At the same time he perceived, too, the damage done to the cause by its association, either real or forged, with the policy of outrage and revenge. Especially in America, where the cables from London gave to all outrages, even bogus ones and those committed by enemies of the League, the appearance of having been instigated by it, the feeling against outrages was very strong. The League must justify itself by stopping them, and show that its powers for good extended in every direction. Davitt put these views before Parnell, but found the latter hard to persuade into any course of action which might tend to lift from the shoulders of the Government and the landlords the entire responsibility for crime. Finally Davitt brought him to see the need for some action in the matter. Davitt then drafted and issued a circular to all the branches of the Land League, warning them of the chief dangers which lay in their path, such as the attempts of mugwumps to enter and capture the branches for their own purposes, but laying particular stress upon the inhumanity and the inexpediency of outrages, especially upon animals. He followed this up by a "pilgrimage," as he called it, against outrage. Going up and down through the country, he devoted himself in the main to exhorting the

people to avoid the old, bad, hateful methods of revenge and to adopt the new, humane, and effective methods of boycotting without injury which the Land League had reduced to a system. At the same time he invaded Ulster. It was one of his most cherished hopes to revive the spirit of the "League of North and South," the fair prospects of which had been blighted by the introduction of sectarian issues and the treachery of the "Pope's Brass Band." Already in 1880, before the General Election, he had issued an address to the Orangemen of Ulster, calling upon them to take their places in the land movement beside their brethren of the south and west. Now he penetrated in person into the sacred groves of Orangeism, and addressed a meeting in Armagh, at which the audience was almost entirely Protestant and the Chairman was the Grand Master of a local Orange Lodge. The principles of the Land League were so powerfully expounded by Davitt as to convert the meeting to enthusiastic adherence and endorsement. Had not Davitt's campaign been just then cut short, and had not the Phœnix Park assassinations intervened, before he could again address the men of Ulster, to resuscitate all the old bitterness and misunderstanding, Davitt might thus early have added to his laurels the merit of bringing about that alliance between the democracies of the north and south of Ireland which is only now in process of slow accomplishment.

The Government was growing desperate. Within a few days the news of Davitt's enthusiastic

reception by the Orangemen and of the failure of the prosecution directed against the League Executive and other leaders reached them. The Irish party was obstructing vigorously in the House of Commons. The country was getting completely out of hand. Coercion was seen to be inevitable if a forced capitulation to the League was to be prevented. But first the most dangerous agitator of all was to be caged—the "discharged convict," the "ruffian" who had initiated this vast organisation, and whom the Government held at their mercy whenever they chose to stretch out a hand. Davitt's return to penal servitude was the first step decided upon. "We have beaten them again," said Parnell to Davitt on the disagreement of the jury in the State trials, "and now they will go for you."

In the eyes of Davitt and the extreme wing of the Land League this was the psychological moment for proclaiming a general strike against rent. Such a strike had been all along in contemplation as a last resort in the campaign, to deal the final blow at the tottering edifice of landlordism when the country was thoroughly well organised. At this time the total membership of the League was more than half a million; the spirits of the people were at their highest point, owing to the succession of victories gained over the Castle; the leaders were all free and in excellent fighting form. Moreover, England was then in handgrips with the Boers. Davitt believed to the end that a strike at that moment would have paralysed the Govern-

ment and procured its unconditional surrender. Later, when the strike was actually ordered, the leaders were in jail, and the Land Act of 1881 had begun the process of sapping the tenants' allegiance to the root-and-branch movement by redressing the more flagrant of the wrongs suffered by them. There is every ground for thinking that Davitt was right, and that the "No-Rent Manifesto" should have been issued in February 1881, instead of six months later.

It was not Davitt's fault that this course was not adopted. Accompanied by Mr. A. J. Kettle, he crossed to London to interview the parliamentary leaders, and to put before them the views of the advanced wing, comprising the immediate issue of a No-Rent Manifesto, and the return of the members from Parliament to take their places in the thick of the fierce conflict such a Manifesto was certain to engender. Parnell himself might have agreed to this proposal were it not for the opposition of some prominent members of his party, who could not be got to consent to it. Davitt returned to Dublin that night. The next day, 3rd February, he was arrested in Dublin, brought back to London, and on the 5th sent to penal servitude again.

CHAPTER VI

THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION

"As long as I have tongue to speak, or head to plan, or hand to dare for Ireland, Irish landlordism and English misgovernment in Ireland shall find in me a sleepless and incessant opponent" (Speech at Manchester, 21st May 1882).

DAVITT'S second term of imprisonment, spent in Portland, was less terrible than his former experience. The pet blackbird, which came into his possession through the humanity of the governor, was the sign of a totally different atmosphere from the hell which he had endured in Dartmoor. In Dartmoor he had been sternly reprimanded by a warder for having dared to pluck a daisy. In Portland, the companionship of the bird during six months of his imprisonment made a great difference in his mental and consequently in his physical condition. He was able to devote himself to writing his reflections on the prison system, with his suggestions for its improvement and humanisation. These were afterwards published under the title of *Leaves from a Prison Diary.*

Many stirring events happened while Davitt spent these fifteen months in prison. The work he had initiated swept on to its destined end; the preparations he had made for the fight with Dublin

Castle proved their efficacy in the hour of need. Forster, after invoking the aid of a strict Coercion Act and imprisoning over a thousand Leaguers without trial, found himself confronted by Davitt's last line of defence—the Ladies' Land League. Against this he battled in vain. The country was seething with disturbance; the local leaders being all in prison, no restraining influence whatever was exerted over the people; and the "Invincibles" and similar societies, which the success of the Land League had kept in the background, began to emerge from their holes now that the Land League was no longer existent as an organised body. Meantime, the blocking of evictions was continued with more energy, determination, and boldness than ever by the band of young women under the direction of Miss Anna Parnell. Forster found himself faced with the alternative of resigning or suppressing the Ladies' Land League and throwing its guiding spirits into prison as he had already thrown the men. He shrank from the latter alternative, and was beaten.

Meantime, Parnell too was chafing under the situation. The No-Rent Manifesto had proved comparatively ineffective, for want of local leaders; and the strain of imprisonment was telling upon his nerves. Also, the influence of that entanglement which was destined to ruin him was already making itself felt. He opened up negotiations with Gladstone, and concluded the Kilmainham Treaty. By this he undertook to withdraw the No-Rent Manifesto, to "slow down" the agitation generally,

and to support the Liberals in passing general ameliorative measures for Great Britain and Ireland —in return for the release of the political prisoners, the introduction of the Arrears Act, and the dropping of coercion. Thus Parnell virtually abandoned the whole of the advantages gained by the Land League at the very moment when Gladstone was casting about for a scheme of pacifying Ireland by the concession of some form of self-government. Davitt and the movement Davitt had created had put all the cards into his hands; and Parnell had failed to play them.

This was the first piece of news that awaited Davitt on his release from prison on Saturday, 6th May 1882. Though he did not then hear the full details, he understood well enough what was in the wind when he learned that the Ladies' Land League had been extinguished by Parnell, ostensibly on the ground of extravagance— in reality, as Davitt at once surmised and afterwards ascertained, because Miss Anna Parnell was made of more unyielding metal than her brother, and refused to be a party to his surrender. A second and more terrible item of intelligence, which reached him later on the same evening, was treated as an absurd canard till the morning brought the awful confirmation. Lord Frederick Cavendish, the "conciliation" Chief Secretary, who succeeded Forster on the latter's refusal to endorse the Kilmainham Treaty, had been assassinated in the Phœnix Park at the very time when Parnell and Davitt, in London, were discussing the new situation

created by his advent. Only much later was it known that he owed his fate to his accidental companionship with the deservedly hated Under-Secretary, Burke, for whom alone the knives were prepared.

The Phœnix Park assassinations saved Parnell from the dangers which threatened his personal leadership, and completed the ruin wrought in the Land League movement by the Kilmainham Treaty. The best-known leaders of the Land League were as strongly opposed to the Kilmainham Treaty and as ready to repudiate it as Davitt himself. Had not this tragic event supervened, Parnell's leadership must have been shaken, the Treaty repudiated, and the struggle revived on the old lines with every prospect, in the then frame of Gladstone's mind, of an earlier and more fortunate Home Rule Bill than that of 1886. But the overwhelming catastrophe of 6th May swept away all landmarks. Now, when Parnell, stirred to his very depths, came to Davitt bent on resignation and retirement into private life, Davitt was foremost in urging upon him to remain leader, inasmuch as any such conduct would look like cowardice or guiltiness. As the future co-operation with the Liberals contemplated by the Kilmainham Treaty disappeared beneath the deluge, and a cry for fresh coercion was not to be denied, Parnell escaped the odium due to what he had willed but had not wholly been able to accomplish. None the less, the power of the semi-revolutionary movement inaugurated by Davitt was broken, and Parnell was prepared

to relapse into the paths of strictly parliamentary agitation, which were so much more congenial to his cold, conservative intellect.

Davitt assisted in drafting the manifesto issued to the public by Parnell and the rest, repudiating the Phœnix Park crime—with perhaps needless emphasis, some have thought; but it is well to remember the blow which this assassination dealt at all their hopes, while at the same time rendering them liable to be suspected, or at least recklessly charged, with complicity. Davitt, although he had been kept in close confinement for the previous fifteen months, and was therefore least of all in a position to have any foreknowledge of the assassins' plans, was nevertheless called upon by the London *Standard* to give up the culprits to justice! This charming specimen of logic and fair play called forth an indignant reply, which appeared under Davitt's name in the *Standard*; it was actually written, however, by his friend Henry George, who was with him at the time. Although the phraseology was not such as Davitt himself would have used, he signed and adopted the letter; and underwent in consequence some censure and abuse from those who imagined they could read into the letter an abandonment of his earlier principles. Davitt, rather than appear to repudiate his friend, endured this in silence. Long years afterwards, however, he gave the correct account of this incident in his *Fall of Feudalism*, attributing the misunderstanding to George's "very un-Irish ideas" of the right thing for Davitt to say in the circumstances. Some

of the most striking passages in this letter, however, Davitt made his own by quoting and adopting them in his speech before the *Times* Commission.

Davitt at once declared his intention not to be bound in any way by the Kilmainham Treaty, to endeavour to revive the active agitation, and as the first step to address a series of meetings already arranged for him in English centres, in company with Henry George and others. Parnell remonstrated, but to no avail ; Davitt was not of those who are easily turned aside from public duty by personal appeals. At a meeting in Manchester shortly after, where he took the chair for Henry George, he gave utterance to the words which I have placed at the head of this chapter, and which announced his unalterable resolve not to rest until the full programme of the Land League was carried into execution. In another speech a few days after, at Liverpool, he expounded his doctrine of land nationalisation. This he had hitherto consented to keep in the background, out of deference to the marked preference of the parliamentary leaders for the less radical solution of peasant proprietorship, which he was always willing to accept as an immeasurable advance on the landlord system. Now, however, that Parnell had retreated from the fighting line, the natural response for Davitt to make was to step farther to the front ; he realised that it was absolutely necessary for him to do the pioneer work, as others were only too ready to preach compromise and moderation. His proposal was that the State should advance the money

necessary to buy out the Irish landlords, and should employ the revenue of Ireland as interest and sinking fund for the repayment of this sum; the expenses of the government of Ireland being met by a tax on the land. This was, of course, virtually Henry George's scheme, which at that time was being discussed very generally in Great Britain. For this Davitt was largely responsible; he was one of those whose persuasions had had most weight in inducing George to come to Europe and to bring out an English edition of *Progress and Poverty*. It was one of his cherished aims to convert the English democracy to land nationalisation, which he rightly declared was of paramount importance for them also.

On an invitation from Boston, he again crossed to the United States, and in a brief lecturing tour addressed crowded meetings in the chief American cities. It was on this occasion, too, that he paid back the final instalment of the money advanced him from the "National Fund" for the purpose of helping the organisation of the Land League. While travelling about, he was interviewed by a representative of the *New York World*, who went with him from place to place, transcribed each evening what Davitt had told him on the day's journey in the train, and presented it for his corrections the next day. The result was a detailed history of the origin and policy of the Land League, clearing up many points with reference to it not theretofore publicly known, and in especial fully explaining the incident of his borrowing from the

"National Fund." Most of this, of course, was subsequently reproduced in the *Fall of Feudalism*, when Davitt was able to speak more freely on certain points; but this lengthy interview (it runs to some twenty thousand words) has an interest of its own from its contemporary freshness. Davitt was then closely following the Egyptian imbroglio, in the hope that it might involve England in difficulties and enable a semi-revolutionary movement in Ireland to compel the concession of at least autonomy. His views on the general European situation, however, as expressed in this interview, do not show much grasp of its actualities. He had not yet acquired that intimate knowledge of European politics which travel and study were afterwards to bestow on him.

Davitt's chief task while in America was to reconcile the jarring factions which had made themselves plainly discernible in the Nationalist camp since the Kilmainham Treaty, and to endeavour to pave the way for a new agitation in Ireland, as he had done once before on his first visit to the States. There was considerable friction at this time between the conservative Nationalists, led by General Patrick Collins, and the advanced wing of the American Leaguers, now represented by Patrick Ford and the *Irish World*. Ford was disgusted with the Kilmainham Treaty, and inclined to turn against Parnell at once; but Davitt persuaded him to wait, in the hope that Parnell might be yet again forced into the fighting line. A conference was accordingly held at which

both sections were represented, and resolutions adopted which had for their aim the revival of the Land League's fighting policy. Having accomplished this, Davitt returned home by way of France, where he visited Egan, and found him also favourable to such a revival. Immediately on his arrival in Ireland Davitt sought out Parnell, and pressed upon him the need of resuscitating the organisation. This view being supported by Mr. Dillon and others, Parnell ultimately consented, at a consultation with Davitt and others in Avondale, to summon a conference with a view to recreating a permanent organisation to replace the Land League. A condition of this "Avondale Treaty," as Parnell jokingly called it, was that the programme of the new League should definitely advocate peasant proprietary, and that Davitt should not raise the question of land nationalisation at the convention creating it. To this Davitt was willing to agree for the sake of seeing the country again in possession of an organisation. He reserved, of course, his freedom of subsequent action.

The National League was the result of these discussions. It represented, both in its programme and in its constitution, the counter-revolution to the movement started by Davitt. Parliamentarianism was enthroned to the displacement of popular action, parliamentary influence dominated its executive in lieu of local control, and Parnellism became the cult of the hour instead of Nationalism. The sign and symbol of the

change was the representation given to members of Parliament as such on the executive of the new body. Davitt fought this proposal at the initial convention, insisting that every member of the Council should go through the process of election thereto by the local branches; but did not press it to a vote, yielding to the argument that confidence must be shown in Parnell and the party. It was one of the numerous instances in which Davitt's horror of appearing to provoke dissension induced him to give way to the opinion of others against his own better judgment.

In one noteworthy respect, however, Davitt exercised a salutary influence over the National League at its formation. He drafted and secured the insertion in the constitution of the following clause:—

"Co-operation in the movement for fostering Irish industries by the appointment, in connection with each branch of the organisation, of an industrial committee, on which manufacturers, shopkeepers, artisans, and farmers shall have proportional representation, and the functions of which shall be—

"(*a*) To encourage the use and sale of Irish products.

"(*b*) To co-operate with the National Exhibition Committee in securing the genuineness of articles offered for sale as Irish manufactures, and in the organisation of local exhibitions from time to time.

"(*c*) To obtain scientific reports of the industrial capacities of their various districts, and stimulate the establishment of local manufacturing and cottage industries."

In these days, when industrial revival is so much in the air, Davitt's pioneer work in this direction should not be forgotten. While he never had any patience for the line of argument which would seek to divert the attention and the energy of the people from the more fundamentally important political struggle into purely industrial work, he nevertheless deemed it a patriotic duty to do whatever could be done, pending the restoration of political freedom, for the encouragement of those industries which English law had deliberately killed. Nor did he confine himself to talk about industrial development. He had already, prior to this period, lent practical assistance to the National Exhibition of 1882, which had such a markedly stimulating effect upon the woollen manufacture of Ireland. He followed up the incorporation of the above industrial article in the National League constitution by expending, with the co-operation of Parnell and the League executive, large sums of money during the following years on the promotion of cottage industries, with striking success. All these, and other services of his to the industrial revival, are now ignored by the folk who are trying to persuade the people that the idea of industrial revival originated with the Gaelic League, and that the despised "politicians," who had the audacity to acknowledge that their efforts in this cause could accomplish very little until the exploitation of Ireland by foreign rule was stopped, never did anything for industries.

Davitt did not, of course, believe in protection as a remedy for Ireland's economic evils; he was too sound an economist for that. His ideal of a prosperous Ireland was one mainly engaged in agriculture, but with all the subsidiary industries which naturally grow out of properly developed agriculture; not enjoying any fanciful state of self-containedness, but freely exchanging her products, especially agricultural produce, for such products of Great Britain and other countries as she might require.

Davitt had no office in connection with the National League beyond membership of the executive. Though regularly speaking at the Sunday demonstrations, he took much less part in its working than in that of the Land League. He devoted much of his free time during the next two years to helping Henry George to popularise the gospel of land nationalisation among the masses of the British people. Already in 1881, immediately before his arrest, at the same time as he was urging upon Parnell the immediate issue of a No-Rent Manifesto, he had also pointed out to him the immense possibilities which lay in an alliance between the Irish and English democracies, and had pressed for the inauguration of a campaign on the Irish question amongst the people in England and Scotland, with a view to securing their co-operation with the Irish members in obtaining the essentially democratic demands of the latter for self-government. Now, at the beginning of 1883, he laid before Parnell a larger and more daring

scheme. This was, definitely to make the Irish party the exponent of the most advanced democratic ideas in the House of Commons. The Franchise Act of 1884 was already looming in the offing, clearly visible to political prophets, and it was Davitt's great idea to capture beforehand, for the Irish cause, the as yet unenfranchised masses, by making the Irish party their spokesmen while they still had no direct representatives to plead their case. He suggested a whole series of measures, covering vast fields of reform at that time barely opened. His proposals contained the germs of Workmen's Compensation, Old Age Pensions, Taxation of Land Values, and Local Government, besides embracing the abolition of the House of Lords and the democratisation of the House of Commons. With this he linked a proposal that an Irish seat should be provided for the veteran Indian reformer, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, so that India's voice might for the first time be directly heard in that assembly, and the solidarity of the two exploited races be strikingly manifested. Bills covering all the points named were to be introduced by the Irish members. The opportunities for embarrassing the Government would be multiplied correspondingly. The attention of the English democracy would thus be drawn to the Irish question, and they would be taught that the Irish democracy was far from being their enemy, but, on the contrary, was prepared to aid them in the struggle against the privileged classes which were the common foes of both

nations. In this manner the way would be paved for a close union and hearty co-operation of the two peoples for the benefit of both and the injury of none save the unjust exploiters of labour and poverty in both countries. It was a noble scheme, foreshadowing those sentiments of international brotherhood which form so great a mass of political thought to-day. It was, moreover, a scheme of great tactical merit, and on this ground it partially commended itself even to the narrow vision of Parnell, although he could not assent to the advanced democratic principles embodied in some of the measures outlined by Davitt. Again the fates intervened. Davitt was imprisoned for four months just at this time; and by the time he came out Parnell had made up his mind that the plan would not do and might be misunderstood, especially in America, as a kind of acceptance of the Empire and abandonment of the National demand.

Davitt's third imprisonment (or fourth, if we count the brief period which he spent in Sligo jail in 1879) was occasioned by a speech at Navan, on 26th November 1882. Distress was again making itself felt in the west, and suggestions that the funds of the National League should be applied to the relief of the sufferers were current. Davitt strenuously opposed such a suggestion; he would not hear of the appropriation of money subscribed for the abolition of landlordism to a purpose which would virtually be buttressing up that power by encouraging the tenants to pay their rents. He told the people plainly that the

remedy for distress lay in their own hands; they could "eat their rents." He upbraided them with placing Ireland in the position of a mendicant nation before the world. He and Parnell and others had promised America that there should be no more begging for Irish famine; and to that promise he, at anyrate, would remain steadfast:—

"I shall never beg a penny for Irish famine. If the people of Ireland, if the tenants and farmers of the west, pay rent that should go to feed their children, then let them die, and Ireland and humanity are well rid of such a coward race."

In this speech, moreover, Davitt anticipated the Plan of Campaign. He proposed that the tenants everywhere should pay no rent from November to May, but should pay, wherever they could, the rent into a National Relief Fund for the relief of distress. Thus the better-off tenants would be helping their poorer brethren, while the landlords would be deprived of any profit whatever from the tenure of land. The essential feature of this plan—the paying of rents into a central treasury for a specific anti-landlord purpose—was that adopted by the Plan of Campaign four years later; with this important difference, that the money was to be applied, in the latter case, to the conduct of the fighting agitation on the estate where it was subscribed—which converted the proposal into an effective weapon of anti-landlord warfare. The root idea, however, of quartering the agitation in

this manner upon the enemy's commissariat is due to Davitt's fertile brain.

The most serious part of the speech, and that on which most stress was laid by the prosecution, was his prophecy that

"unless wise and just legislation should prevent its necessity, the time will come when the starving population of Donegal, of Connemara, and of Kerry, will be told to march down in their serried phalanxes upon the plains and seize the land upon which to live like civilised beings in a Christian country."

Which reads like a forecast of the policy of Jack Williams and the "Triangle Camp." There is a suggestion in the *Fall of Feudalism* from which I infer that Davitt's maturer judgment disapproved of this speech.

"Mr. T. M. Healy and myself gave simultaneous expression to the prevalent feeling in speeches which left nothing to be desired in the way of strong language, however one of them might be lacking in cogency of argument and political wisdom."

The prosecution for this speech did not come on till the middle of January 1883. Davitt employed the interval in a lecturing tour in England on the Irish question and land nationalisation. For the most part he was exceedingly well received, both Irishmen and English working-men swelling his audiences. At Oldham, however, he had to face

an organised attempt to break up his meeting by a band of his own countrymen. He recurred to this experience the next day, when he was speaking at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. The course he had taken since he came out of Portland, he declared, had cost him most of his political friends; but, he added, it had not mitigated the persecution of England, seeing that he was again about to be confined in one of Her Majesty's Hotels. He reiterated his determination to make no compromise with Irish landlordism and Castle rule. He would not flatter his countrymen and minister to Irish national vanity for the sake of basking in the sunshine of popularity. He would consistently take his stand upon the broad principle that the land of Ireland should belong to the whole people of Ireland, and not to any small privileged class, whether that class was composed of landlords or of tenant-farmers.

During this tour Davitt visited once more the town in which he had spent his boyhood, and renewed his acquaintance with his old Haslingden friends, who gave him a most cordial reception, particularly his old master, Mr. Poskett, the former director of the Wesleyan schools in Haslingden. He alluded to his boyish days in his speech that evening, and recalled the time when, as the only Irish Catholic boy at those schools, he had profited by the care of Mr. Poskett, from whom, he said, he had never heard a single word that could hurt his feelings as a Catholic. In the sketch which he then gave of what the Land League movement had already done

and what it might be expected to do, he laid special stress, first, upon his determination four years previously to put an end to the social slavery and obsequiousness which he then saw existing in the west, and which was inconsistent with the development of an industrial people; and in the second place, upon the entire absence from his campaign of anything resembling a vendetta of hatred against England. Although he had done, and would continue to do, his utmost to pull down the injustice maintained in his native land by England, he had never preached a war of revenge; and this, he said, was in great part due to his remembrance of the kindness and generosity with which he had been treated by the people of Haslingden when he came there as a poor Irish boy.

While Davitt was still in England, and without any notice to him, his trial was commenced in Dublin for the Navan speech. Hastening across, he arrived in time to address the court on his own behalf, but was not permitted to cross-examine the police witnesses who had given evidence against him in his absence. He was in every possible way bullied and hectored by the judges. He was prosecuted, this time, under the old statute of Edward III., then revived for the purpose of enabling the Castle to incarcerate Nationalists without the production of any definite accuser or the imputation of any definite crime. As "rogues and vagabonds," against whom alone the old statute was directed, they had to give bail to be of good behaviour,—that is to say, not to give

the Government any more trouble,—or go to jail. Davitt naturally chose the latter alternative, and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment in Richmond Bridewell, four of which he served.

The foundation of the National League and the falling off that it evidenced had cost Parnell the support of Patrick Ford and the *Irish World*, which had now become a very violent organ. Davitt on more than one occasion wrote to Ford, remonstrating with him for the advocacy of the senseless policy of revenge in his paper; and he succeeded in the end in inducing the *Irish World* to abandon this wild crusade. Extreme views showed signs of revival all over the United States at this time. A Convention of the American League was to be held while Davitt was in prison, and there were grave fears lest the outrage party should gain an ascendency in its counsels. Consequently, the Glasgow Leaguers, recognising that no other man could deal with such a situation as Davitt could, sent to him in prison an exhortation to give the undertaking as to good conduct required to obtain his release, that he might be free to cross to America and exert his influence in favour of saner counsels. Davitt found it impossible to comply with this request. In a powerful letter to John Ferguson, replying to this resolution, he set forth his views on the inalienable character of the right of free speech, and his resolve not to surrender it at the dictates of a tyrannical Government, for whatever temporary advantage. At the same time, in the guise of an exposition of his reasons for believing

that the American Leaguers would be wise enough to steer clear of such barbarous policies as were feared, he gave eloquent expression to his abhorrence of the dynamite policy on every possible ground —humane, moral, political, and tactical. He held in the utmost contempt those whose notion of retribution for Ireland's sufferings was to blow up some English town, to the destruction of innocent lives and the consequent legitimate exasperation of the English people, hitherto only passive and ignorant, into an active hostility to the people supposed to be responsible for these barbarities.

Davitt was visited while in Richmond by Red Jim M'Dermott, the Government spy, who was the originator of the dynamite outrages which began to occur about this time. M'Dermott, on being admitted to the presence of Davitt and his then fellow-prisoner, T. M. Healy, began at once to speak in a mysterious semi-whisper about "the boys," and to praise the Park murders. Davitt at once terminated the interview. Immediately after his release Davitt heard of M'Dermott's proceedings in Montreal, Canada, where he was endeavouring to incite to dynamite outrages, and had actually procured the commission of one. Davitt, in a signed telegram to a Montreal newspaper of which he was then correspondent, exposed the spy, with the result that Red Jim's activities in that quarter came to an abrupt termination. Davitt had procured irrefragable proof of M'Dermott's connection with the Secret Service:

the knowledge that this was in Davitt's possession, and that he could prove M'Dermott's habitual incitement to outrage, prevented this worthy from making his appearance as a witness before the *Times* Commission.

CHAPTER VII

HOME RULE

"It was the old combat of Saxon and Celt, after all, in which numbers counted for everything and justice had to kick the beam. It was, however, no ignominious or hope-killing encounter, but a moral victory for Mr. Parnell's forces which more auspicious days and chances would turn into an act of deliverance for Ireland" (*Fall of Feudalism*, ch. xl.).

DURING Davitt's stay in Richmond Bridewell the trial of the Invincibles took place—an event which probably had something to do with Parnell's refusal to adopt Davitt's plan for the agitation of British questions. During this period, too, occurred that most monumental and flagrant instance of papal interference in Irish affairs in the interests of England — the audacious attempt to stop the Parnell tribute. Davitt had already, in the course of his English tour, spoken words of warning with reference to the Errington Mission, and had declared that Ireland could not be ruled from Rome any more than from London. The fight against the Roman dictation was practically over before Davitt left prison; but he at once determined to utilise it for a purpose always dear to his heart—the conversion of the Orangemen to Home Rule. On the 15th of August 1883 he addressed a

meeting at Draperstown, Co. Derry, in which he pointed the moral of the Pope's anti-Parnell Encyclical, and showed that, under pretext of striking at an individual, it was in reality aimed at the whole National movement. He showed clearly, too, what he was never tired of insisting on, that Home Rule would mean the weakening of Roman Catholic influence in the Imperial Parliament, while it would at the same time place the Protestants of Ireland in a much more commanding position in the Irish Legislature than they could ever hope to occupy in the foreign senate. The golden moment, however, for conciliating the Orangemen had been lost by Davitt's imprisonment three years earlier, and in his efforts at this time he was a pioneer rather than an achiever of results.

The winter of 1883-4 was again mainly devoted by Davitt to campaigning amongst the English democracy, particularly on the question of land nationalisation. He had hopes at this time that the doctrines of Henry George might take sufficiently firm root in England to spread thence to Ireland. There the conditions were unfavourable for initiating such propaganda ; besides, although not bound by any actual pledge to Parnell, Davitt was chary of introducing this element of possible discord into the Irish camp. In Great Britain, however, his efforts could be productive only of unmitigated good.

At one of the first of these meetings, held in St. James's Hall, London, under the auspices of

the Land Reform Union, with the Rev. Stewart Headlam in the chair, Davitt gave utterance to an indictment of the individualist system which travels beyond the scope of the land question and is perhaps the nearest approach to a definitely socialist pronouncement to be found in his speeches:—

"The individualistic civilisation of the present system denies to the million the possibility of giving play to what is good in human nature, by putting its passions and selfishness into deadly activity in a cut-throat competition for wealth."

This is fundamentally the same idea with that of the "Good-Will in Man" propounded by Mr. H. G. Wells in his latest work.

Back in Ireland by the end of the year, Davitt spoke at Clonmel on 6th January 1884—the first time he had visited that part of Tipperary—and advocated the extension of the National League which he characterised as an incomplete organisation. Immediately afterwards he again crossed to England, to welcome Henry George, who had just then arrived in Great Britain on a lecturing tour. Davitt accompanied him in the Scottish portion of that tour, and assisted him to stir up the crofters to a due sense of the rights of their position. Just prior to this tour Davitt had an unpleasant experience at a lecture of his own at Newcastle-on-Tyne, where the platform was raided by a band of roughs. Warned, however, by what had happened the previous year at Oldham, Davitt this time was

prepared to meet the disturbers. The police, of course, proved utterly helpless; but a band of Davitt's own friends were there, and succeeded, after nearly an hour's fighting, in ejecting the intruders. During this struggle Davitt stood on the platform, revolver in hand—not by any means the first or only time when he had occasion to be thankful that he carried such a weapon. After the conclusion of the disturbance he quietly proceeded with his lecture. Hooligans (the term had not come into use then, but it is expressive) were less ready to attempt to break up one of Davitt's meetings after that experience.

Before George returned to America Davitt brought him over to Ireland. George lectured in the Ancient Concert Rooms, Dublin, on 9th April, Davitt speaking in support of his programme. Parnell decided to put a stop to this advocacy of land nationalisation, though Davitt was only employing, in a very mild way, the liberty for which he had expressly stipulated at the time of the formation of the National League. Parnell declined to attend a meeting at Limerick on 14th April, when the freedom of that city was conferred upon Davitt. On the next day Parnell received the freedom of Drogheda, and took occasion, in a speech in that city, to denounce in no measured terms the land nationalisation proposals of Davitt. It was impossible, he said, to abandon peasant proprietorship, which had been in the Land League programme all the time—quite forgetting, apparently, that he had definitely abandoned portions of the

Land League programme at least as important. There was, he thought, a design on foot to use the newly enfranchised artisans of the towns against the peasantry ; but this design, he predicted, would fail. The whole speech was conservative in tone. The National movement has suffered since from the too great reliance upon the peasantry to which it was committed, and from the neglect of the interests of the towns to which Davitt tried to turn some attention. Parnell also declared in this speech that the settlement of the land question must precede Home Rule—a position which he shortly afterwards abandoned when he found Mr. Chamberlain coquetting with the idea of Home Rule.

Davitt's health, never good since his frightful prison experiences, was at this time particularly bad. All through his life his strenuous political work represented only one side, and that not the most laborious, of his activity. A friend of his about this time declared that he might as well be in prison as in his own house, for the pen was never out of his hand from morning till night, with the exception of an hour for dinner and *occasionally* an hour for exercise. No frame could endure this for more than a limited time. Davitt, therefore, began to think of a tour abroad in order to recruit his shattered health. Australia was in his mind, as he at first intended to undertake a lecturing tour on his holiday ! Some of his friends, hearing a distorted account of his plans, jumped to the conclusion that, in disgust at Parnell's treatment of him and in despair of being able to make any

substantial livelihood at home, he was about to leave Ireland permanently and settle in Australia. On hearing this, John Ferguson, one of his staunchest friends, wrote an impassioned letter to the press, describing in glowing but not exaggerated terms Davitt's services to Ireland, and exhorting the country to intervene at once so as decisively to prevent the possibility of his being lost to the cause. Ferguson's suggestion was that Davitt should be persuaded to allow himself to be elected a member of Parliament, and to accept the salary which it had now become evident must be given to the members of the Parnellite party out of the national exchequer. Davitt had already, when in Portland prison in 1882, been elected a member, and disqualified by special vote of the House of Commons as a treason-felony prisoner. The fifteen years of his original sentence, however, would expire in another year; and even if he were disqualified meantime, Ferguson suggested that a demonstration could be made out of his repeated return, and he could meanwhile be sent to Australia as the party's ambassador. The more formidable obstacle presented by Davitt's reluctance either to enter Parliament or to accept any testimonial of a monetary character should be swept away, he added, by an irresistible national insistence. Based as it was on a misapprehension, this letter nevertheless did good service in recalling the popular attention to Davitt, and reminding the people, by the threat that they might lose him, what a priceless asset they had in his patriotism.

Letters and resolutions without number, including a nobly worded tribute from Archbishop Croke, poured in in response ; but at the same time came a letter from Davitt setting right the mistake, and assuring the public that he had never contemplated a permanent settlement outside of Ireland. He took occasion, at the same time, to make quite clear his views upon entering Parliament and upon the acceptance of a testimonial. He had, he said, made no pecuniary sacrifice, like the others, which could justify his reception of a salary !

"To have experienced wrong and known suffering, and to be privileged to know that one's humble efforts have tended to reduce the one and to alleviate the other evil in the lives of others, is to me the richest testimonial, as it brings me nearer to the realities of happiness than any other form of testimonial. Membership of the House of Commons has been shown by many brilliant examples to be no check upon the acts or reflection upon the principles of an Irish Nationalist. In still refusing such a field of labour for Ireland, I desire to draw no distinction between work within and work outside of Westminster. . . . Without in the least depreciating the services or undervaluing the quality of those Irish Nationalists who have made parliamentary action what it is at the present time, I cannot look upon it in any other light than one of serious risk to the future of the National cause that a seat in the British House of Commons should come to be regarded as the one means by which every Irish Nationalist of any prominence in the popular movement is expected to do most service for Ireland. Should such a

mode of action succeed in bringing about the realisation of our National hopes, the reward will be all the greater to those who shall have accomplished the task; but while willing to aid such work as heretofore, and wishing that it may be successful, I am more firmly convinced than ever that it is only by the intelligent and determined combination of our people outside of Parliament and the concentration of the great moral forces at our command that the full measure of our country's rights can be achieved."

This attitude towards parliamentary work—one of judicious support, approving of it as one important weapon, but by no means the only nor even, if isolated, the most effective one, towards the attainment of Ireland's rights—was Davitt's consistent position all through his career. His words still point out the true path to follow in the present-day controversy on the subject—avoiding idolatry of the M.P. on the one hand, and undue depreciation of him on the other. Davitt frequently recurred about this time to the importance of work outside the Commons, and the dangers of concentrating all the popular attention on that House.

Out of Davitt's many speeches at this time I select for quotation one delivered at Tralee on 24th July, on account of its peculiar appropriateness to existing controversies. The struggle between the two Houses of Parliament over the Franchise Bill had reached an acute stage; and a problem of the moment was, what support, if any, should the Irish give to the Liberal campaign against the

Lords ? Davitt was quite clear that Ireland could not afford to stand aside during this struggle, but should intervene as effectively as possible, through the votes of the Irishmen of Great Britain, against the House of Lords :—

"The Irishmen of Breat Britain will . . . remember that the House of Lords has always been the deadly enemy of Ireland ; that it is now the only place left in the Imperial Parliament in which Irish landlordism has any political influence ; that it is the representative of the hereditary principle, which has been alike the political and social curse of the people ; and, recollecting all this, is it to be supposed for a moment that the Irishmen of Great Britain will refuse to strike when the reward of victory will be a powerful enemy of National rights overthrown for ever ? . . . If anyone were to propose that the Irish members should retire from Westminster and leave the English and Scottish members to settle the affairs of the Empire between themselves, such advice would be scouted as ridiculous by many sincere Nationalists ; and to my mind the advice tendered to the Irish people of Great Britain not to agitate against the Lords because the English and Scotch are doing so is far more ridiculous still. The Irish people of Great Britain, like those at home, are Democrats as well as Nationalists."

It was only, however, on condition that the fight against the Lords was to be a thoroughgoing one that Davitt would consent to lend it a hand. A few months later he declined to speak at a Hyde Park meeting designed to intimidate the Lords into surrendering to the Commons, because, as he

said in his letter to the meeting, he wished them to persevere in that opposition, that they might be ended and not mended. The guarded and hypothetical disapproval expressed in the Tralee speech of withdrawal from Westminster has also actuality at the present juncture. Davitt was always open to consider such a proposal as a matter of tactics ; he had himself suggested such a step as portion of the No-Rent campaign in 1881. But he never was so inane as to suggest that any principle was involved in such a withdrawal, or that difference on this purely tactical ground was any reason for separating from the main body of Nationalists.

Early in 1885 Davitt set out upon the tour which he had been vaguely planning for some months, and which a severe illness in the previous summer had made imperative. He visited Egypt, Palestine, and Italy. Palestine particularly impressed him; and prepared his mind for his subsequent adherence to Zionism as the only solution of the Jewish question.

He returned in the summer of 1885, with health substantially recuperated for another spell of work, to find Parnell now plunged in intrigue, playing off one English party against the other, with Home Rule as his objective. Davitt saw the dangers of this game, and repeatedly warned him not to trust the Churchill and Carnarvon overtures, which he always believed to be merely an electioneering dodge, to win the support of the Irish vote in England and the Irish party in Parliament. Par-

nell, however, was so far taken in by these manœuvres as to advocate, in a speech at Wexford, the establishment of such an Irish Parliament as would have power to impose customs duties on English products. This was reprobated by Davitt as crass folly: he asked Parnell, Did he seriously believe that any measure of Home Rule containing such a provision was obtainable from either English party? But Parnell persisted in believing that it was obtainable from the Tories. His declaration for protection did great harm to the prospects of Home Rule, being at once fastened on by Mr. Chamberlain, who was then coquetting with the Home Rule idea, as a reason for declaring that with such Home Rule as that proposed by Mr. Parnell he could have nothing to do.

When the General Election of 1885 came nigh, the question of the moment was, What would the Irish leader, supreme at home, direct the Irish voters in Great Britain to do? Large numbers of such Irishmen were now for the first time in a position to exercise the franchise. Were they to cast their votes for the Tories, in the hope of some measure of Home Rule from them; or for the Liberals, in consideration of the undoubted trend of the Prime Minister's mind in the direction of further concession to Ireland? Parnell unhappily allowed himself to be influenced by the hope of winning what he wanted from the Tories, by the natural desire to have some revenge upon Gladstone for the manner in which he had treated him in the coercion days, and by the desire at the worst

to obtain the "balance of power." He directed the Irish vote in Great Britain to be cast solid for the Tories, and did so in a manifesto couched in language of quite injudicious bitterness. That manifesto cost him dear. The Irish vote went Tory in sufficient numbers to leave the balance of power in the hands of Parnell indeed for a time; but when the Tory promises proved delusive, and it became necessary to court the Liberals again, the latter had been sufficiently weakened to make it possible for the Bright and Chamberlain cave to defeat Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons, and thus to destroy the fairest hopes Ireland has yet had of obtaining that measure. Had the Irish vote gone in the other direction, and had Gladstone been thereby enabled, while he was yet at the zenith of his powers, to force the Bill through the Commons, and to bring on at once the contest with the House of Lords—how different the history of both England and Ireland since that date would have been! As it was, English Liberal feeling was quite needlessly exasperated, distrust of Parnell's opportunist tactics universally strengthened, and no compensating advantage of any kind gained. For it was not long before the Government of Lord Salisbury showed its determination to grant no concession whatever to the men to whom it owed office.

Davitt remonstrated vigorously, both in private and also in public, against this foolish and short-sighted policy. He consequently found himself completely estranged from the party and its leader.

Not for long, however; for the Tory treachery speedily threw Parnell back upon his negotiations with the Liberal ministry, whom he now found it necessary to place in office in order to avoid fresh coercion. This brought Davitt back into line with the party; and he heartily supported it during the stirring times in which Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill was introduced and beaten.

After the defeat of the Gladstone measure of reconciliation, and the General Election which again returned the Tories to power, to introduce the worst Coercion Act which had yet been inflicted upon Ireland, Davitt went to America to attend the Chicago Convention of August 1886. There were again fears lest the party of violence should get the upper hand, or, in default of this, should endeavour to disturb the assembly. Davitt accordingly sought out John Devoy, his former friend but then his bitter enemy, for the purpose of finding out how the land lay amongst those irreconcilables who still held the originator of the most successful Irish movement in history to be a traitor to the cause of Irish Nationality. He learned enough to reassure him, and the Convention, as a matter of fact, passed off most harmoniously. Gladstone's Bill and Parnell's conduct in accepting it were unanimously approved of. Davitt was astounded at the change which had come over American feeling in the interval which had elapsed since his last visit. People formerly irreconcilable foes of England were now prepared, in consideration of the olive branch held out by Gladstone, to

bury the hatchet, and give Home Rule a fair trial. This was also Davitt's own position. He never wavered, as his last will showed, in his belief in the justice and expediency of complete independence for Ireland; and he was peculiarly fitted to win the English people to this idea, in virtue of his incessant condemnation of "the insensate policy of revenge," and his insistence upon the friendly commercial and other relations which might and should be hoped for and encouraged between the two free nations on opposite sides of the Irish Sea. But he was prepared to see how Home Rule would work; and he came to contemplate with equanimity the possibility of a substantial and working scheme of Home Rule destroying the separatist feeling in the country.

The only incident of note at the Chicago Convention was the interchange between Davitt and John Finerty. The latter made a couple of violent speeches, one at a gathering a few days previous to the Convention, the other at that assembly itself; both of which Davitt replied to in his most forcible fashion.

This was the year of Davitt's marriage to Miss Mary Yore of Michigan, at Oakland, San Francisco. The marriage was an extremely happy one, and the unflinching revolutionary's sweet and lovable disposition blossomed to its full charm in the family circle. The people of Ireland presented Mrs. Davitt on her marriage with a pretty residence at Ballybrack, Co. Dublin, which was called "Land League Cottage." This present to

his wife was the only testimonial of any kind that Davitt ever accepted from the Irish people in return for his long years of toil and suffering. He preferred to maintain his independence by the labour of his pen, even when the people, both in Ireland and America, would have been only too glad to have an opportunity of expressing their love for him in concrete form.

For all through these stormy times, whether or not his policy was in accord with the dominant feeling of the country at the moment, Davitt was loved by the Irish people. Never did any difference of opinion shake their faith in his unchanging rectitude, his whole-hearted earnestness, his resolute attachment to the cause of Ireland and the welfare of her people above all things on earth. Deep down in the people's hearts the conviction that here, at anyrate, was a man who had testified to his worth and earnestness by deeds and by suffering, a man who would never be found wanting in the hour of need, remained, latent and often voiceless, but ineradicable, as his guerdon for those years of unselfish endeavour for which he sought no other reward, as his buckler against the cruellest assaults of his enemies. English ministers and minions might say what they would, but no Irishman ever doubted the purity of Michael Davitt's motives, the innate grandeur of the soul they could not always comprehend. Those foes of democracy and opponents of happier conditions of life for humanity, who are only too ready to besmirch the names of the world's greatest heroes,

hesitated before denouncing Michael Davitt to the Irish people with the unmeasured vituperation it is their wont to employ against such champions of the people. Even when Davitt stood apart, as he often did, from the main current of political thought or action in the country, this reverence for him remained. It was an invaluable asset for the Irish people, through so many trying years, to have in their midst a man who viewed the kaleidoscope of politics with the clear vision of the sage, and tested all persons and policies from the standpoint of their ultimate tendency towards human good. Even if his words of advice or criticism were dissented from, they could not be disregarded; they had a knack of piercing to the essence of things, and their stimulative effect cannot be measured by the immediate outcome. Even when he was silent, he was a force to be reckoned with; politicians and prelates who knew such a watch-dog of the public interest was eyeing them could not tread so recklessly as they otherwise might.

The year 1887 was marked by the passing of the last and worst of the Coercion Acts (that which is still on the Statute-book, as a handy weapon for any future Imperialist Government, Whig or Tory, which may find itself in active opposition to the Irish demand) and by the initiation of the "Plan of Campaign." This, the device of Messrs. Harrington, Dillon, and O'Brien, was mainly carried into execution by the last-named two. In its spirit, if not in its details, it amounted to a renewal of the old Land League fighting policy,

and as such was disapproved by Parnell. Davitt, at the request of Parnell, took comparatively little part in its operations. The best work which he could perform at this time was the conversion of the British electorate to Home Rule, his broad labour sympathies rendering him an ideal advocate for the appeal to the English masses. He was soon absorbed, also, in the heavy task of preparing the defence of the League, of the party, of Parnell, and of himself, against the infamous forgeries of the *Times*.

Davitt was busily engaged in furthering the industrial movement about this time. He formed a company for the spread of Irish woollens and the encouragement of their export. He lost money by this, as also by his later attempt to establish a glass-bottle industry in Dublin; but others profited, and the country as a whole was benefited, which was enough for his unselfish soul.

It is curious, in the light of the attitude of Davitt and Parnell respectively at the time of the Split, to note that during these years Davitt repeatedly gave expression to his apprehension that Parnell was drawing too close to the Liberal party, and that the independence of the Irish party was in danger of being sapped in consequence. Just as he did not hesitate later and earlier to reprobate Parnell for his ill-timed hostility, largely on personal grounds, to the Liberals, so he fearlessly attacked Parnell at the time when the latter was indeed inclined to be subservient to the Liberal party, and was in effect paving the

way for his own downfall, by accustoming his followers to look upon the Liberal alliance as the all-important thing. Davitt's doubts on this point continued up to the eve of the divorce court proceedings, which were the beginning of the end for Parnell.

CHAPTER VIII

THE *TIMES* COMMISSION

"This once-powerful organ of English public opinion earning again the title of 'literary assassin' which Richard Cobden gave it near thirty years ago . . . carrying on a deliberately planned system of infamous allegation against political opponents who were but striving to redeem the sad fortunes of their country, in efforts to bring to an end a strife of centuries' duration between neighbouring nations and peoples" (Speech before the Commission).

On the morning of the day when the Perpetual Coercion Act was set down for second reading, the *Times* published what purported to be a facsimile letter of Parnell's, in which he expressed his satisfaction at the murder of Burke in the Phœnix Park, and explained his denunciation of that crime as an act of expediency merely. This climax of a long series of attacks upon the Irish leader and his party was the Tory method of countering the influence which the propaganda of Home Rule was beginning to have in the constituencies. The campaign of calumny, which was the method afterwards employed to bring about the South African War, and which appears to be the ordinary weapon of the foes of Indian and Egyptian reform at the present hour, was first used against the Irish. Parnell took no notice at first, beyond contemptuously denying the authenticity of the

letters; but ultimately demanded an inquiry. This the Government granted in the form of a judicial Commission, with powers virtually to try the Land League and all who had been concerned in it for high crimes and misdemeanours. The Commission sat for over a year, from October 1888 till November 1889, and pursued its investigations over the whole field of recent Irish history. The *Times* was allowed the utmost licence in the conduct of the case. Instead of the inquiry being confined to the one relevant question of the genuineness of the letters purporting to be in the handwriting of Parnell, Davitt, and the rest, it was permitted to range as widely as possible, and to drag up every little outrage—bogus, manufactured, or committed by enemies of the League—which could be evoked from the history of the previous ten years. The gravamen of the charges lay in the theory that the Land League was in reality the cloak for a secret conspiracy against the whole government of Ireland; that it was not so much a transformation as a continuation of the Fenian movement; that it was consequently linked with every propaganda of dynamite or murder which violent men in America might have set on foot. Davitt held, therefore, both for the prosecution and for the defence, the key of the situation. Admittedly a Fenian in his youth, who had suffered imprisonment as such, he was also the Father of the Land League and the chief link between the Irish and the American branches of the movement.

On Davitt, then, fell the onus of unravelling

the threads of this vast conspiracy against the good fame, the liberties, the very lives, of the leaders of the Irish people. He dived to the heart of the secret at once: he suspected Pigott, the former proprietor of the *Irishman*, the uncompromising rebel for whom the New Departure represented a falling-off from the ideals of militant Nationalism. Confirmation of this suspicion was speedily forthcoming. Egan, the Treasurer of the Land League, in America since its dissolution, had in his possession certain letters of Pigott's and copies of the replies sent to them. These were written at a time when Pigott was trying his customary blackmailing devices to extract money from the Land League funds. They showed remarkable resemblances in phraseology to the forged letters, and suggested at once that Pigott had used these genuine letters as models over which he might trace the forgeries. With this clue, the whole plot was soon laid bare. The *Times* people were in a position to know the falsity of the letters at an early stage, Pigott having told them he could not prove them to be genuine; but they nevertheless persisted in proceeding with the case, hoping to raise a sufficient number of subsidiary issues to overwhelm the Irish party and its leaders with shame, even though the main charge could not be proven. For this reason, Pigott was kept out of the witness-box as long as possible, until sufficient time had elapsed to enable the *Times*, through their counsel and other witnesses, to create so great a prejudice in the public mind against Parnell and

Davitt that any subsequent revelations could not shake this impression or rehabilitate its victims.

Point by point the case of the *Times* was met by Davitt. He, and not Parnell or Lewis, was the chief organiser of the defence. The great work of his life was on its trial. This movement, started by him in enthusiasm for the welfare of his wretched fellow-countrymen, out of burning indignation at their treatment by the landlords under the ægis of British rule—this movement, which had turned the minds of the Irish people as a whole away from vain dreams of revenge, and had taught them to concentrate their strength upon the attainment of practical reforms in their own land—which, while it held the field, had destroyed the murder-club and deprived the dynamiter of his occupation—which had shown the way to a better understanding between two peoples too long estranged by the diabolical policy of their rulers—this movement, one of the landmarks of human progress, was stigmatised as the vile emanation of criminal brains, breathing forth nothing but hate and revenge. Such a charge was fittingly bolstered up by forgery and the employment of agents - provocateurs and blackmailers. Davitt flung himself into the task of unmasking the wretches with all his volcanic energy. He traced Pigott through the mazes of his unhappy existence. He found out where he had been at work to obtain evidence, and where he had pretended that evidence was to be obtained for money, while he was merely forging it. Davitt had priceless aid

from the hundreds of Irishmen all over the world, who offered their services for the elucidation of the plot. They virtually formed a volunteer secret service, by means of which every move of the *Times* was known in time to be countered. Only one surprise had the *Times* in store for Davitt: this was the production of Le Caron (or Beach, to give him his real name) as a witness. Beach had been entirely unsuspected, up to the moment of his appearance in the box, by his associates in the Clan-na-Gael. His evidence, however, proved of little account. Davitt's adroit treatment of him prevented him from making the most even of what he knew. Davitt allowed the impression to get abroad that he would cross-examine Le Caron as he had cross-examined all the other witnesses; and Le Caron, with this in view, withheld a portion of what he knew as to Davitt's movements in America on the occasion of his first and especially his second visit, so that he might produce this evidence with more effect in reply to the questions of Davitt himself. Davitt, however, did not cross-examine; and the spy was consequently debarred from adding in his re-examination to what he had said about Davitt in the first instance.

This was a typical example of the manner in which Davitt behaved all through this trying time, both before and during the progress of the inquiry. From his early training and associations he had acquired that cast of mind which derives huge intellectual satisfaction from plotting and counter-plotting. It is a proof of the natural greatness of the

man that, after his years of solitary self-communion in prison had shown him the dangers and the evils inseparable from the plotter's trade, he never turned back, never flagged in his efforts to drag his countrymen out of the mire of conspiracy and to set them on the high road of open challenge to the obnoxious ruling powers. Only two traces of the old Adam remain for the casual inquirer: one is his attempt to save the ideal of conspiracy in itself by suggesting, as he did on more than one occasion, that the Irish failure to be good conspirators arose from some racial unfitness for that kind of work, and not from intrinsic impossibilities in the policy; the other remnant of the old conspirator is found in the zest with which he flung himself into a task where, to meet conspiracy, conspiratorial methods had a legitimate place, were indeed called for by the circumstances of the case. On either side of the chess-board of conspiracy similar qualities are required. There is no essential difference between the mind of the secret plotter and that of the detective who plucks the heart out of his mystery. Davitt's conduct of the investigation on behalf of Parnell and the others against the machinations of the *Times*, and the fashion in which he baffled all those machinations, revealed his possession in the highest degree of the great intellectual acuteness, resourcefulness, and knowledge of men which are the stock-in-trade of both. The story is told in some detail in his *Fall of Feudalism*, and shows what a formidable enemy organised society or organised

reform might have found in him had he possessed the moral as well as the intellectual make-up necessary for the degrading rôle of either conspirator or sleuth-hound.

In his own evidence before the Commission Davitt displayed the extreme delicacy of his sense of honour by the manner in which he answered, or refused to answer, the queries put to him with regard to the Fenian organisation. As far as his own part in that enterprise went, he was ready to give the fullest information. He protested once or twice against being virtually tried a second time for the offence, if offence it were, for which he had already undergone nine years' imprisonment. But he was willing to explain fully his share in the plots of those times so long as others, whose consent he had not obtained to be equally frank about them, were not in any way implicated by his disclosures. Wherever there was any possibility of such implication he steadfastly refused to reply to the questions put to him. The person involved might be in the safe asylum of the United States, or otherwise so situated that no possible harm could befall him, but that made no difference to Davitt's scrupulous reticence. At first the judges showed some inclination to attempt to force him to reply as desired; but they soon abandoned that line, perceiving, no doubt, that they would be quite unable to break or bend Davitt in his fixed resolve.

He was severely cross-examined by the Attorney-General (the present Lord Alverstone), particularly with regard to the famous "pen" letter.

Davitt had often narrated the full circumstances in which this letter was written to his friends, but when heckled in public he had uniformly contented himself with saying that the letter was written to prevent and not to suggest assassination, without troubling to give further details. This, therefore, was the first occasion on which he publicly made it plain that he had suffered all those years in Dartmoor and other jails for another's criminal intent, the execution of which he had prevented.

There is scarcely an instance in history of a man, out of a sense of loyalty to a comrade, remaining silent so long and amid such tempestuous surroundings on a matter so vital to his reputation. It is all the more remarkable from the manifest unworthiness of the object for whom Davitt made this sacrifice. When asked for proof of his statements regarding this letter, Davitt, unable to give them without the co-operation of this other, publicly from the witness-box appealed to the man in question to tell, "from his safe asylum in America," the true facts, and thus confirm Davitt's story. The appeal was made in vain. The man who nineteen years before had allowed a self-sacrificing friend to enter the hell of penal servitude for his fault had not grown more generous with the years. There was no response to the request, which Davitt naturally did not repeat.

The forensic labours of the Commission itself taxed the capacities of the ablest lawyers in England and made reputations for some of them, including the present Premier. Davitt, besides all the other

work he undertook, defended himself. In this capacity he revealed another of his gifts—that of a great advocate. The petty chicanery which is popularly, and not altogether unjustly, associated with the exercise of the legal profession, was altogether alien to Davitt's nature; for lawyers in general, indeed, he had the healthy contempt natural to a man in deadly earnest, whose power in advocacy is inextricably bound up with the strength and fervour of his belief in the cause he is upholding. But the higher powers of the advocate were all his, and were afforded an opportunity of deploying on a worthy field in his six-days' speech before the Commission, subsequently published as *The Defence of the Land League*.

The very fact of the delivery of this speech was characteristic of the man. Parnell had altogether withdrawn from the proceedings before that stage was reached, and had advised Davitt to do the same. This was in consequence of the refusal of the Commission to order the production of the books of the "Loyal and Patriotic Union," the body which had financed Pigott and Pigott's employer, Houston. The books of the Land League, so far as they were in existence or available, had been produced; and in common justice, especially after the flight and confession of Pigott, the books of the other party to the case, the party whom that fact had transferred, in the public eye, from the prosecutor's bench to the dock, ought also to have been brought into court. Had this been done, many links in the chain of

evidence concerning the anti-Parnell conspiracy could have been made plain. Davitt suggests in the *Fall of Feudalism* that the complicity of certain members of Lord Salisbury's Government in the plot could have been proved to the hilt. In the absence of the possibility of such a complete vindication, Parnell deemed it best to ignore the concluding proceedings, and thereby show his contempt for the flagrant partisanship of such a decision—paralleled later by the "Hushing-up Committee" on the Jameson Raid. It was Parnell's desire that Davitt too should abstain from taking any part in the final stages of the investigation. This Davitt could not consent to do. The Land League, which was on its trial, was the child of his brain. It owed to him not merely its origin, but its fostering and development in the earliest and darkest days of its existence. He could not allow any judgment against it to go by default while he had power to defend it by voice or pen. That Parnell had good reasons for withdrawing from the case is undeniable. Had Davitt, however, followed his advice and example, one of the most eloquent pleas for the Irish peasantry that ever was framed, one of the most instructive revelations of Davitt's personality and ideals, would have been lost to us. Davitt has said of Parnell that the best record of his career is to be found in his own account of it, as a witness, before this Commission. The same may be said, with some differences, about Davitt himself. The record in his case is to be found not alone in his evidence, but also and

chiefly in his speech; and, Davitt being a more complex and many-sided man than Parnell, as well as one whose career had longer to run at the date of the Commission, the record is less complete than Parnell's. It is nevertheless indispensable for those who would form a true concept of the grandeur of the man.

Two passages which I shall quote give the key to the spirit in which he addressed himself to his task. One is from the beginning of this great speech:—

"I know right well that in appearing here at all at this stage, and undertaking to address this Commission, I shall run counter to that popular opinion in Ireland which has endorsed the action of Mr. Parnell in withdrawing himself and the case of his colleagues from this tribunal. Nevertheless, I feel impelled by a sense of loyalty to two cardinal principles of a somewhat stormy political life—by a religious adherence to truth and justice—to stand here and defend, as well as I can, the name and character and cause of the peasantry of Ireland, whose protests against wrong and whose demands for redress I have tried in season and out of season to embody and enforce in organised articulate action. And, my Lords, I confess there are personal as well as other reasons why I have determined to ask for a hearing from this Court. The Land League, which is here on its trial, was largely, though not entirely, the offspring of thoughts and resolutions which whiled away many a dreary and tedious hour in political captivity. It lightened the burden of penal servitude, and brought compensating solace to some extent for the loss of liberty, of home, and of friends, to think,

and reason, and plan how, when freedom should once again restore me to the rights and privileges of society, I should devote to the good of Ireland what strength of purpose or ability of service long years of patient study and yearning aspirations should equip me with in a just cause. And, my Lords, the idea of the Land League recalls more than even this to justify my present position. The conception of some such movement did more than give my thoughts a congenial occupation while in the companionship of the thieves of Dartmoor prison. It represented the triumph of what was forgiving over what was revengeful in my Celtic temperament. For there is in every one of us, whether Celts or Saxons, a living, constant combat between what is good and what is, in its nature, evil. And when one finds oneself in prison at the age of twenty-two, bereft of everything that endears us to life, and surrounded by every condition of existence that could excite and keep alive passion and resentment, it is a hard and unequal struggle to conquer the spirit of hate and revenge. Yet I say it now, and I do so with my whole political work of the last ten years open to inquiry, that I believed as firmly in Dartmoor as when I made my last political speech on a public platform that a movement upon the lines of the Land League would result in removing the barriers which prevented the people of Great Britain from understanding and doing justice to the people of Ireland. Nay, more, I convinced myself then, as now, that the ultimate outcome of such a movement would be the sinking of racial animosities, and the cementing in bonds of friendship and equality of the democracies of these three countries. I felt also then, as now, that a movement of such a nature would be a presentation of the Irish idea

to Great Britain and to the world that would place Ireland in its rightful position among civilised peoples as the advocate, not for her own people alone, but for all peoples, of social justice, and of the full rights of the labouring masses everywhere. It was with me then as when, on my release from Portland prison in 1882, after completing nine years' imprisonment, I wrote the following words to the London *Standard*: 'I have suffered by their power, and, as I believe, by their ignorance and prejudice; but there is no bitterness in my heart to-day towards the English people. The doctrine of "the land for the people" is a universal gospel, and in its triumph is involved the social regeneration of England as clearly as the social regeneration of Ireland.'"

The other quotation is from the concluding portion of the speech:—

"I came here to address this Court contrary to the advice of Mr. Parnell, who was the central figure and chief object of the *Times*' malignant allegations. I have therefore spoken only for myself. I felt that it was my duty to come here, no matter who should advise me to the contrary. I may be wrong in my opinion, but I thought and believed that if one with my record of suffering, physical and otherwise, at the hands of Irish landlordism and Castle rule; of the conflict of a lifetime with the law as it has been administered in Ireland; of the punishment which that conflict has entailed—I felt and believed, if I came before this tribunal and pleaded, in my own way, the cause of the Celtic peasantry of Ireland, that perhaps the story which I have told and the case which I have submitted might possibly, in part or in whole, arrest the attention of the people

of Great Britain when they come to study your Lordships' labours and report. And I thought and hoped that in the defence which I have made there might possibly be found some help in the task of finally solving this Anglo-Irish struggle. Should my hope be realised, should I have contributed but in the least possible degree to point to a just and feasible solution of a problem which would bring peace and some chance of prosperity to Ireland, I shall be happy in the recollection of the task which I am now bringing to a close. I can only say that I represent the working classes of my country here as I did in the Land League movement, and I know they feel, as I do, that, no matter how bitter past memories have rankled in our hearts, no matter how much we have suffered in the past in person or in our country's cause, no matter how fiercely some of us have fought against and denounced the injustice of alien misgovernment, I know that, before a feeling of kindness and goodwill on the part of the people of England, Scotland, and Wales, and in a belief in their awakening sense of justice towards our country, all distrust and opposition and bitter recollections will die out of the Irish heart, and the Anglo-Irish strife will terminate for ever when landlordism and Castle rule are dethroned by Great Britain's verdict for reason and for right."

The high hopes which Davitt then entertained and thus expressed for the speedy reconciliation of the two estranged peoples were soon to be dashed to the ground, partly through the folly of Irishmen themselves, and partly through the relapse of the British people into their old apathetic ignorance on the Irish question. In the days of aggressive and conscienceless imperialism there was little hope

of a hearing for the sentiments of justice in the diffusion of which Davitt saw the brightest prospects for the future happiness of both nations. To-day, the lasting friendship of Ireland, all but won for Great Britain in the Gladstone period, has receded from her grasp. Ireland has burnt many Sibylline books since the time when a Home Rule Bill with crippling financial clauses was joyfully hailed as offering an acceptable solution of the age-long strife. How soon the spirit of justice and humanity embodied in the labour movement may, sweeping away the petty selfish policies of Whig and Tory alike, bring us once again within reach of that which once seemed so near, it is not yet safe to predict. But that day must come ; and when it does, the words of Michael Davitt, Irish rebel and cosmopolitan labour advocate, will be recalled as the prophetic harbingers of the final reconciliation and lasting peace between England and Ireland.

CHAPTER IX

THE PARNELL SPLIT

"A heart-breaking conflict between men who were separated by no principle of political faith and no aim of public duty" (*Fall of Feudalism*, ch. lii.).

THE year 1890 was the year of Parnell's complete vindication from the charges brought against him by the *Times*; it was also the year of the O'Shea divorce case.

Davitt was busy during the earlier portion of this year on two projects both closely connected with his great aim of uniting the Irish and English democracies in the cause of progress. He was preparing to establish the *Labour World*, to be the organ of labour in all parts of the three kingdoms; and he was organising an association of agricultural labourers in the south of Ireland. From the beginning of the land agitation Davitt had the interests of the labourers at heart quite as much as those of the farmers. One of his reasons for objecting to peasant proprietorship as a final solution of the land question was the well-justified doubt whether the position of the labourers would be any better, might not even become worse, under the régime of selfish peasant owners. He taught the

labourers of the south of Ireland how to combine, and gave them their first lessons in the power of organisation—which the agricultural labourer is of all others the slowest to learn. In the full career of this work Davitt was interrupted by the tidings of the commencement of divorce proceedings against Parnell by Captain O'Shea.

One of the most marked traits in the psychology of Irish politicians—and perhaps the generalisation might be extended to politicians of other countries—is their capacity for imitating the ostrich whenever anything disagreeable appears on the horizon. They are inclined to make an excessive application to politics of the methods of Christian Science, and to imagine that to ignore an inconvenience is equivalent to annihilating it. This was the principle on which Parnell's followers appear to have acted during the time when the O'Shea affair was in the air and had not yet been submitted to the tribunals. The belief that it was all a fresh plot, and that Parnell would emerge from it as unscathed and triumphant as he had from the Pigott slanders, prevailed amongst the Irish members, and induced them to refrain from questioning their leader about the matter. Davitt too shared the belief that another plot was on foot; indeed, the rapidity with which the divorce proceedings followed upon the rehabilitation of Parnell and the discomfiture of the *Times* as a result of the Commission, as well as the reappearance, in the new attack, of sinister figures who had already borne a share in the efforts to besmirch Parnell, pointed unmistakably in this

direction. It is not a hazardous conjecture that the motives and powers impelling O'Shea and Pigott in their respective attempts to become the architect of Parnell's ruin were substantially identical, however the structures which they reared might differ with regard to the substratum of truth on which they were erected. That the conspirators had this time got hold of a truth instead of a lie alters not a whit, any more than does their success in the second instance, the despicable character of these assaults upon a public man in the view of achieving his downfall by fair means or foul. Davitt believed to the end that so much of truth as this there was in the original Parnellite theory that the whole O'Shea affair was a plot. But even while he was prepared to lend it a more unquestioning assent, he could not, like the others, regard this as a reason for not approaching Parnell on the subject, and obtaining from him a definite statement of the facts. He accordingly sought an interview with Parnell for this purpose, the last friendly chat they were to have. Parnell, knowing his intention, characteristically opened the interview by censuring Davitt for his exertions in the cause of the labourers. He objected to any such agitation; it had a socialistic tendency; these people should no doubt be looked after, but paternally; it was wrong to teach them to do anything for themselves; Bismarck (not yet fallen from his high estate) was quite right in his manner of treating these people. Besides, any agitation in Ireland except that for Home

Rule did harm to the prospects of the latter; especially one so eminently calculated to alarm the capitalistic Liberals. After this preliminary piece of bluff Parnell condescended to discuss the subject on which Davitt wanted information. He assured his questioner categorically that there was no foundation whatever for the O'Shea charge; that the whole thing was only another infamous conspiracy, which would fail as ignominiously as the previous one. Davitt, whose nobility of soul was too great to enable him to sound the depths of such perfidy, believed and trusted Parnell implicitly. He had no hesitation, thereafter, in telling all inquirers that they need have no fears as to the upshot of the O'Shea case: that Parnell was certain to come out of it unsmirched. This piece of treachery towards one of the noblest-hearted of men was unquestionably the worst offence of which Parnell was guilty. The bitterness of knowing that he had been thus deceived, when the truth came out a few months later, did not tend to make Davitt more gentle in his castigation of the man who had betrayed him and led him into the position of having pledged his word to a falsehood.

Among the multifarious occupations of Davitt at this time—the projected paper being in itself sufficient to fill the whole time of any ordinary worker—special mention must be made of his intervention in the Liverpool Dock Strike. This great labour dispute had paralysed the trade of Liverpool for weeks, to the loss of all parties con-

cerned, particularly of the Liverpool dockers. They were so largely Irish that Davitt, apart from his general interest in trade quarrels of this character, felt specially called on to interfere. He went down and offered his mediation—a sufficiently risky thing to do, seeing that many others, including the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, had already exerted themselves to that end without effect. Davitt's intervention, however, was completely successful. He was accepted as arbitrator by both parties, the men feeling confidence in his well-known record as a labour advocate, and the masters also accepting his reputation for probity as ample guarantee that the decision would be a fair one. His decision proved satisfactory to both, and put an end, on equitable terms, to a struggle that had occasioned untold misery among the workers during the winter season.

This was a good omen for the success of his new paper, the *Labour World*, the first number of which made its appearance a few months later, on 21st September. Davitt's long experience in journalism had now culminated in the issue of a paper of his own. The man who writes primarily to express the ideas that are in him, and only in a secondary degree to make a living, must always feel the craving for an organ of his own, wherein he can say precisely what comes to his mind, unhampered by any restrictions. The *Labour World*, however, was not a success. It only lived eight months, expiring at the end of May 1891. In part its failure was no doubt due to the weight of the task which fell

upon Davitt's shoulders after the Split, when he was exerting himself to save the National movement from the ruin into which it had been cast by Parnell. The work to be performed in Ireland, wearing and heart-rending as it was, was not calculated to enable Davitt to devote his best energies to his paper; and much of the work was perforce left to be performed by subordinates. But the main reason, unquestionably, why the *Labour World* did not succeed was that it was before its time. It was a pioneer paper, the herald and prophet of the advanced labour movement of the present day. While Parnell, Conservative and opportunist, was objecting to any labour agitation as an obstacle in the path to Home Rule, Davitt, with the prescience of the true statesman, was laying the foundations of the movement with the success of which, as every political observer now recognises, the Home Rule cause is inseparably bound up. The leader of the movement which Davitt started was at this time on the way to wreck it; and the indomitable pioneer was toiling away at the construction of a fresh engine for the benefit of the community in general and of Ireland in particular. For although Davitt's sympathies were world-wide, and his attachment to the cause of the poor, the oppressed, the exploited, knew no bonds of race or clime, yet he never ceased to be first of all an Irishman, never forgot that the regeneration of one's own immediate surroundings, however petty such a task may appear to the aspiring soul, is the shortest and the surest way to the regeneration

of the world at large; and in spreading the counsels of labour organisation amongst the British people, he never lost sight of the fact that it was from the awakening and enlightenment of this people that the fairest chance of obtaining justice for Ireland presented itself.

In these days of militant labour it is interesting to read the programme mapped out for the labour party by the pioneer who is already so little remembered. In his first editorial Davitt wrote:—

"What does the progressive labour movement demand? Its claims may perhaps be summed up under three heads: (1) it asks for the better and the more democratic organisation of labour; (2) it demands that to the community, not to the landlord, shall accrue that immense annual increment which is due to general industry and enterprise; and (3) it calls for an extension of State and municipal control and ownership of such monopolies as can be managed by public bodies in the public interest."

Modest as this looks, it was too advanced to be received with favour in 1890–1; the imperialistic debauch had yet to come and to work itself out of the body politic before labour ideals could be received. But it will be seen that this brief programme contains the essence of the subsequent development of the labour movement; and Davitt's later speeches, with his support of the labour members at the General Election of 1906, show that he marched with the movement, and that his programme of 1890 was no stereotyped dogma, but

the temporary expression of a living and developing faith.

The control of the *Labour World* enabled Davitt, when the blow from the divorce court definitely fell on the Irish movement shortly after the paper's foundation, to give expression to his opinion promptly and in unqualified fashion. That opinion was an absolute rejection of Parnell's leadership. Its fearless utterance placed Davitt once again in a position of isolation. The followers of Parnell were, apparently, determined to be his followers still. Magnificent rhetoric about loyalty to their great leader ; extravagant laudation of that leader's services and indispensability—these were the contributions of the other prominent National politicians in the first shadow of the disaster. I am not now concerned to discuss the grounds they believed themselves to have for such an attitude, nor the many pitfalls which Parnell had laid for their unwary feet, deluding them into the belief that a show of unswerving loyalty would induce him to resign. What must be emphasised is, that of all the Irish Nationalist leaders who took the anti-Parnellite side in the Split, Davitt alone had a clear and consistent record; he alone maintained from the first that the Parnell leadership was impossible. Once deceived in such a deadly fashion by Parnell, he could not trust such a man any longer to lead a great National movement ; nor could he doubt that the devices by which Parnell was capturing the temporary allegiance of his followers were but so many more tricks of the old

pattern. Those who allowed themselves to be deceived by them had reason to regret that they had not from the first adopted Davitt's attitude.

Similarly, it must be noted that all charges, either of clerical dictation or of English influences, as motives for the action of the anti-Parnellite leaders (and the first certainly, the second probably, cannot be disavowed for all of them), have no application whatever to Davitt's action. His opinion was his own; right or wrong, he formed it on his own judgment, with the facts before him, and did not thereafter waver from it. Neither the Catholic bishops nor Gladstone had spoken when Davitt did. Nor need one, in order to uphold Davitt's attitude, approve of the hypocritical English howl against the man who had had the misfortune to be found out. That spasm of unctuous rectitude, which vented its hatred of a haughty foreigner and contemner of English ideas under cover of a zeal for the interests of morality, had nothing in common with Davitt's clear-sighted and disinterested repudiation, as no longer a help but a hindrance to the cause, of the leader who had shown that his nearest followers and friends could never trust his word again.

When the Split became an accomplished fact, on the majority of the Irish members finding it impossible to maintain their first attitude and go on as if nothing had happened, Davitt became a foremost protagonist in the fray, to the detriment of his paper, but to the still greater damage of the Parnellite cause. Wherever Parnell went, and

particularly wherever he fought an election, Davitt followed him and put the issues fearlessly, without rancour but without disguise, before the electorate. He lent a hand to the Parnellite defeats, first in Kilkenny and then in Sligo. Finally, he himself consented to be a candidate for Parliament. There was a dearth of candidates, and it was felt that the aid of such a man as Davitt could not be dispensed with from any of the fields of operations where now a flank enemy as well as a direct attack had to be met. It was after Parnell's death, towards the end of 1891, that Davitt consented to stand for Waterford against the new Parnellite leader, Mr. John Redmond. His act of self-sacrifice in thus loyally flinging himself into that part of the field where it was deemed his services might be of most value, has been ungenerously cavilled at as an abandonment of his earlier ideas, but only by those who do not wish to understand. He had previously, it is true, declined to enter the House of Commons; but it is equally true, and equally significant, that he was never at home there when he did gain admittance. His temperament was in no degree that of the parliamentarian; and it was therefore a true instinct that kept him out of the House as long as possible. He had for thirteen years supported parliamentary agitation as one weapon in the fight against English rule; he had admired and estimated at its true value the work of those who formed the parliamentary detachment of the National army; but it was only at the urgent call of duty, and in default of any

substitute, that he reluctantly forewent his objections to undertaking this disagreeable branch of work himself. To say that in doing so he was guilty of any breach of principle would be as reasonable as to declare that such a breach was committed by a man who, having for years employed labourers to dig for him, in stress of emergency finally took up the spade himself. The theory, if it is to be rationally defended, must be upheld on the basis of an Oriental caste system, for it is untenable on any principle known to Western civilisation.

Davitt was unsuccessful in his first attempt to get into the "parliamentary penitentiary," as he used to call it; nor was his second venture, when he contested North Meath at the General Election of 1892, much more satisfactory. He was returned, it is true; but a petition having been lodged on the ground of undue clerical influence, he was unseated.

It is one of the strangest ironies in Davitt's career that he, the least clerically minded of Irish politicians, should have become the standard-bearer of an outrageously arrogant clericalism, as he did in this Meath election. The clergy, from the bishops down, had with a few isolated exceptions declared against Parnell. Like some of the English, they seized this opportunity, under cloak of moral zeal, to destroy a man they had long feared and distrusted as a non-Catholic, an anti-cleric at heart, and probably an agnostic. As in the case of the English Liberals, too, Parnell himself had placed in their hands the instruments of his own destruc-

tion. He had, contrary to the advice of Davitt, introduced, soon after the foundation of the National League, a rule making clergymen, as such, eligible for membership of electoral conventions without any form of election or delegation. The rule was either unnecessary or harmful; for if the priest were a true friend of the National cause, nothing would be more certain than his choice as delegate by his flock; and if he were not, there was manifestly no reason to throw the doors open to him. But Parnell's conservatism found a congenial element in those clergy who were afterwards to overthrow him. As he told Davitt, half in jest and altogether in earnest, the priests were very useful to keep a check on extreme men like Davitt himself while the members of the party were absent in London. He paid the penalty for this breach of democratic principle in the virulence of the attacks made upon him in the days of his decline by the reverend gentlemen whom he himself had called into prominence in National politics. No one need think that he has mastered the possibilities of vile and vulgar vituperation who has not made a special study of the utterances of holy men filled with zeal for the welfare of faith and morals. All the machinery of ecclesiastical power was unscrupulously brought into play in the campaign against Parnell. The altar and the confessional became annexes of the hustings. Davitt was almost the only man on his side to protest against the employment of such methods. He was, nevertheless, the

man who suffered most heavily for their employment.

Into the contests in Meath, both North and South, the whole clerical battery was introduced. The reports of the trials in December 1892 of the election petitions in these two constituencies make instructive reading for those who would deny that clericalism is a danger to the very existence of a healthy political life. Referring my readers thither for details of the various kinds and degrees of clerical intimidation employed, I will only say here that there was absolutely no evidence to connect Davitt with the nefarious methods used on his behalf, and that he was expressly exculpated from any share in the guilt which nevertheless invalidated his election. In regard to the most serious ecclesiastical interference, on the contrary, he was shown to have protested against its exercise. The pastoral of the then Bishop of Meath, Dr. Nulty, which was read in all the churches prior to the election, and which practically threatened any who might vote Parnellite with the fires of hell, was in itself sufficient to annul the election, and was also the fountain and origin of most of the subsequent intimidation. Davitt heard beforehand that the bishop was about to issue some pastoral with reference to the election, and even though he was not aware of its monstrous terminology, he at once sent a message to Dr. Nulty requesting him to do nothing of the kind. That he did not go further, and on the issue of the pastoral in spite of his remonstrance retire altogether

from the contest, is partially explained by the fact that Dr. Nulty was an old Land League bishop, one of the few who had taken their stand with the people in the days when the prospects of the organisation were dark. It is easy to understand how, when withdrawal from the contest would have meant a mortal insult to this old friend, would at the same time have utterly disheartened and discomfited the already distracted band of comrades, fighting enemies both at home and abroad, with whom Davitt believed the highest interests of Ireland to be bound up—it is easy, I say, to understand why in these circumstances Davitt did not withdraw, but went through the election and faced the consequences. Yet it is, I submit, clear at this distance of time that he ought to have withdrawn after the issue of the pastoral. As it is, there is no episode in Davitt's career on which his admirers would less willingly dwell than this of the Meath Election Petition.

His fault, if fault it were, was only that of having allowed himself to be forced into a false position. Of anything in the nature of undue influence he was personally entirely innocent. Yet the real culprits, with characteristic clerical generosity, left him to bear the brunt of the consequences. As Davitt himself put it in a letter to Mr. W. T. Stead at the time :—

"The successful petition in North Meath leaves me in my usual plight of being punished without the comfort of having merited my fate. The judges declared that nothing whatever was proved against

me. They tire not to report anybody to Mr. Speaker. Therefore am I unseated, cast in costs which spell ruin, and doomed to meet about the *only* misfortune that has not yet overtaken me—bankruptcy."

Bankruptcy followed in due course, the priests of Meath taking no steps whatever to rescue from this fate the man whom they had led into it. Davitt adopted none of the customary devices by which the effect of bankruptcy proceedings is sometimes alleviated. Everything he had went in the smash—even the dwelling-house which had been presented to his wife. And dark times followed, borne with his customary fortitude, till his never-resting pen once more placed him in a position of comparative security.

CHAPTER X

PARLIAMENT

"I have for four years tried to appeal to the sense of justice in this House of Commons on behalf of Ireland. I leave, convinced that no just cause, no cause of right, will ever find support from this House of Commons unless it is backed up by force" (House of Commons, 25th October 1899).

WHEN the Parnell Split took place, one of the vexing problems of the hour was, what should be done with the " Paris Funds " ? These were sums banked in Paris at the time, set aside for National purposes, and which it was manifestly unfair to employ in the internecine struggle of Nationalist against Nationalist. It was decided that they should be allocated to the support of " the wounded soldiers of the Land War," the evicted tenants whose heroic sacrifices had alone made possible the successes won for and by their more fortunate brethren. The funds were intrusted, for this purpose, to Messrs. Davitt and Dillon—a selection which, seeing that they both belonged to one section in the Split, testifies to the position held by these two men in the eyes of their comrades and the public. The duties in connection with the disbursal of this fund Davitt continued to discharge till it was exhausted.

Davitt was one of the secretaries of the National Federation, the body created to represent the anti-Parnellite party when the National League was captured by the Parnellite section. The Federation was speedily called upon to face a fresh element of dissension within its own ranks. The clerical and conservative elements which had forced themselves into renewed prominence in the struggle against Parnell, were now endeavouring to assert their complete domination over the National movement. They were more formidable foes to fight than the Parnellites, but the warfare against them was one into which Davitt could enter with less searching of heart.

The Liberal Ministry of 1892 revived for a time the hopes of Irish Nationalists. The second Home Rule Bill was accepted by the leaders of the majority, Davitt amongst them, as an improvement in some respects upon that of 1886. In common with nearly all Irish Nationalists, Davitt appears to have attached little importance to the clauses dealing with Irish representation at Westminster. Yet these, both in their original and in the revised form, were intrinsically impossible. It is hard to understand to-day how it could ever have been imagined that such a Bill would pass or would receive the approbation of the British people.

During this Liberal Ministry's tenure of office Davitt exerted himself to obtain from the Chief Secretary the appointment of as many Nationalist magistrates as possible. Whether he acted wisely

in so doing is one of the moot points in connection with his career. That the scandalous anti-National partisanship of the magisterial bench in Ireland—where, in addition to being the servant of property, as elsewhere, it is also the representative of an alien community—has been the source of innumerable wrongs to the Irish masses, is notorious. And it was Davitt's idea that, as far as possible without breach of principle, all positions of vantage in the country should be captured, and converted into fortresses of Nationalism. Thus he had, from the very beginning of the Land League idea, urged as one of the essential parts of his scheme that the extreme Nationalists, who had hitherto held aloof from such things, should take an active part in local and municipal politics. The wisdom of this policy, attested by its results, is not now disputed by the most violent extremist in Ireland; indeed, one so-called extreme section is now blaming the main body of Nationalists for not making enough use of the powers put into their hands by the Local Government Act. On the other hand, it is obvious that the principle cannot be applied to the taking of salaried office under Government, which is equivalent to making oneself a cog in the machinery of misrule, powerless to revolve otherwise than as the driving force of the engine may direct. The Whigs and "Castle Catholics," who would fain gratify their thirst for office under the guise of a desire thus to forward the National cause, were always held by Davitt in the utmost contempt. Between these two clearly marked

classes stands the doubtful case of the magistracy. It is a position in which power may be exercised for the benefit of the people, and it is not a salaried office; so that, apparently, a Nationalist can accept it without any sacrifice of his convictions. So at least Davitt held. But the fact that elevation to the magisterial bench comes from ministerial nomination differentiates it from those positions of dignity and influence which can be bestowed and removed by the suffrages of the people. The atmosphere of the charmed circle into which he is admitted is apt to effect a subtle alteration in the mental outlook of the Nationalist promoted to the bench: he is persistently and increasingly subjected to the temptation to think that law is more important than justice, and order than liberty. And although the capabilities of popular magistrates as a National asset have been demonstrated on a few occasions during the recent prosecutions for cattle-driving, yet it must be admitted that these are exceptions. It would, I fear, be found on careful investigation that the great majority of the "Davitt magistrates" are no longer to be counted upon to take the popular side in a crisis. The test of results must be taken as showing that, in thus energetically pushing the creation of Nationalist magistrates, Davitt was guilty of an error of judgment.

Early in 1895 Davitt set out upon a lecturing tour in Australia. The great English-speaking communities beneath the Southern Cross had many attractions for him. Fenian, Land League, and

later democratic associations contributed to increase his interest in Australasia. It was there that the men of '48 and '67 had in large part suffered their punishment for disputing the moral validity of British rule in Ireland. It was from Australia that the dramatic escape of John Mitchel, and later of John Boyle O'Reilly and others, had been effected. With this last escape, carried out by John Devoy and others of the Clan-na-gael in 1876, Davitt had a personal association, the news of this rescue having earned for him in Dartmoor an increase of severities, lest he too should evade the care of his jailers. Then Australia was the home of John Walsh, the friend with whom Davitt had traversed Mayo prior to the starting of the Land League, and who had lent such valuable aid in the organisation of its earlier stages, from the Irishtown meeting onwards. Nor had Walsh and other Irish emigrants forgotten the cause in Australia. An auxiliary organisation had been formed out there, funds had been sent with an even greater proportional generosity than that of America, and several Irish missions had been received with magnificent enthusiasm and practical sympathy. Lastly, Australia was even then, though not so markedly as she has since become, the Mecca of progressive labour reformers in virtue of the series of enlightened legislative measures passed there to ensure the happiness and well-being of the community. All these reasons combined to render Australia an exceptionally interesting land for Davitt to visit. He spent eight months in the Colonies, and afterwards

put on record his impressions in his book on *Life and Progress in Australasia*. This book is a fascinating account of his journey and description of what he saw in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand, interspersed with delightful self-revelatory glimpses and enlivened by not a few amusing anecdotes. The free, abounding life of Australia was a never-ending source of delight to him. Experiments in labour legislation he carefully studied, as models for use at home. Especially instructive is the detailed study which he made of the Labour Settlements on the Murray River, then not long started, and exemplifying in an interesting manner the difficulties which beset any partial or piecemeal attempt at reform of existing social conditions. A special section, too, is devoted to the Australian prisons. Davitt was all his life an ardent advocate of the reform and humanisation of the prison system, and in these chapters he exhibits the contrast between the brutal methods still prevailing at home and the more humane systems generally (though not universally) adopted in the Colonies. The prison named "St. Helena," in Queensland, particularly pleased him; so much so that he jokingly expressed his intention of asking the Government to let him serve his next term of imprisonment, whenever it should arrive, in that penal establishment.

At a time when heads were still being gravely shaken over the reckless and "socialistic" character of Australian legislation, Davitt had nothing but praise for its enlightened and advanced

character. He visited the Coolgardie goldfields at the height of the boom there, and saw through the hollowness of the prosperity that depends upon gold-mines for its basis. He devotes a few stinging pages to the record of the Maori struggles for liberty, and lavishes on the sufferings and the heroism of this splendid race that sympathy which never failed to go out to the oppressed everywhere. He examined closely into the causes of the Kanaka labour trouble in Queensland, where South Sea islanders had been imported in the same manner, and with the same excuses, as the Chinese were to be later into South Africa. Davitt's first-hand investigation of the facts in this case led him to conclusions which in every essential point anticipate those arrived at by unprejudiced students of the South African Chinese imbroglio.

While Davitt's tour was in progress, the General Election of 1895 took place. Learning that, owing to the prevalence of dissension and the consequent apathy of the people, the funds of the Irish party were at a low ebb, he generously set aside a large portion of the proceeds of his lectures for this National purpose. He returned home to find himself at last a member of Parliament. He had been elected unopposed, in his absence, for two constituencies—East Kerry and South Mayo. He chose to represent a division of the county in which he was born, and where he had first kindled the flame of the Land League: for South Mayo he sat in the Imperial Parliament for four years.

Davitt was never happy as a parliamentarian.

His fiery soul chafed beneath the restraints of the House's absurd and archaic formulas; his zeal for reform resented the polite indifference with which legislators are apt to approach the most burning questions of social progress. Eloquent orator as he was, his words were always directed to some definite and well-thought-out end: the flood of talk on trivialities which takes up so much parliamentary time was abhorrent to him. It may be doubted whether, with his temperament and his history, he could ever have been an effective parliamentarian, even in a National Assembly in College Green. It must have been an exceedingly alert and actively progressive assembly in which Davitt could have felt really at home. But the Parliament in which he sat was a foreign one, the right of which to pass laws for his country he denied; and he entered that House in an era when it was launching the nations it represented on a wild career of international debauchery, utterly neglecting the true interests committed to its charge. It was impossible, therefore, that his predominant feeling in connection with the House of Commons could be other than an unutterable weariness and disgust. And, as that is not the frame of mind in which great parliamentary work is done, Davitt did not accomplish any great work in Parliament. His speeches were not frequent or long; he never acquired the mystic "parliamentary manner." He was invariably listened to, however, with respect and unbroken attention. Not only did his personality and his

history compel this attention, but on the rare occasions when he broke silence it was always because he had something to say. Especially on the subject of prison reform were his words always eagerly listened to. But on the whole he cannot be ranked high as a House of Commons figure, nor did his stay there form a very stimulating portion of his career. Nothing in his parliamentary life became him like the leaving of it.

In 1896, at the Irish Race Convention, Davitt delivered one of his most eloquent and at the same time most practical speeches. All his speeches, indeed, were eloquent in proportion as they were practical. There never was a man who had more dislike of talking for talk's sake, or of that flamboyant form of oratory (sometimes deemed to be peculiarly Irish, but in reality rather American) which he used to call "sunburstery"—namely, a species of verbal flag-waving, froth without form or substance.

In 1897 the oft-mooted project of an Anglo-American Alliance was prominently before the public. It was Davitt who defeated it. He felt that a special responsibility lay on him in this matter. It was largely owing to the movement that he had initiated that the minds of Irish-Americans were so altered as to make it possible for such a proposition as an alliance with Great Britain to be even entertained. In the changed situation created by the Gladstone offer of peace and goodwill, he had rejoiced to find, in 1886, the temper of Irish-America so friendly towards this

measure of conciliation. But England had turned her back on Gladstone, and had disowned his noble efforts to heal the breach between the two nations. Had it been otherwise, Davitt himself might have been an ambassador of peace, making a free Ireland the link between the democracies of England and America. As it was, he felt that the occasion was one on which no opportunity ought to be lost of showing England that she really had something substantial to gain from the freedom and friendship of Ireland, apart from the intrinsic value of having a contented nation at her side. It was the time to teach the world that Irishmen in the United States were true to their motherland, and would have no close relationships with the country which held her in bondage. So he crossed to the States, and in a brief campaign in the proper quarters secured that the Anglo-American Arbitration Treaty, which was expected to be the germ of a formal alliance, should be rejected by the United States Senate through the Irish influence on that body. It was a bitter pill for England, and a salutary reminder of the evil work she was doing in turning against her, now as all through the ages, the genius and energy of the Irish leaders from whom, under a free constitution, she might have elicited a frank and friendly support.

1898, the year of the centennial celebrations in honour of the brave men who tried in vain to free Ireland at the close of the eighteenth century, was itself noted in modern Irish history for two events: the passing of the Local Government Act,

and the foundation of the United Irish League by Mr. William O'Brien. This last was the harbinger of the present-day Irish party and movement. The people, exhausted and disgusted by the squabbles of at least three factions within the ranks of their parliamentary representatives, had sunk into the deepest apathy. From this there seemed no rousing them, until Mr. O'Brien, taking a leaf out of Davitt's book, inaugurated a fresh and vigorous land agitation in the west of Ireland, nigh the spot where the Land League was first founded. The main objective of the new movement was the division of the grass-ranches between the impoverished farmers who strove to scrape a scanty pittance from small parcels of ground in "agricultural slums," while in close proximity cattle and sheep grazed on the lands from which their forefathers had been driven. The various leaders of parties rather tended to resent this new agitation as a kind of poaching on their preserves; Mr. William O'Brien was not then in Parliament, and although he himself had been consistently attached to the majority section of the Irish party, then led by Mr. John Dillon, he threw membership of his new league open to every Nationalist, and expressly excluded existing differences from its purview. Consequently, from a combination of petty jealousies with an honest doubt as to the utility or judiciousness of the new movement, the parliamentary leaders left Mr. O'Brien pretty much to himself in the task he had undertaken. The one noteworthy exception was Davitt. No

place for pettiness was to be found in his nature; the root-principles of the United Irish League appealed to him, and he flung himself with all his old ardour into the thick of the fight for its establishment and its spread throughout the west. His eloquence and influence were of the greatest benefit to the infant organisation in those days of its beginnings. Mr. William O'Brien's Diary of those years, which he has since published in his newspaper, may be referred to in proof of this. It is not a source to which uncritical credence should be attached as a rule, for it was made public for a partisan political purpose, and is not above the suspicion of doctoring; but as it was published after Mr. O'Brien had definitely quarrelled with Davitt, and in fact as part of a campaign against a "Triumvirate" of whom Davitt was one, its testimony may be accepted when it tells us, as it does, of the valuable aid lent by Davitt to the O'Brien movement at this stage. Sunday after Sunday, as in the early days of the Land League, he travelled to the west from Dublin to address meetings in his own or other constituencies, sometimes in company with Mr. O'Brien, sometimes alone. The work prospered; the movement grew. And although it was at its best but a poor simulacrum of the Land League, it was heartening, after so much apathy, to see the people discarding dissension and banding themselves together once more upon a popular platform in pursuance of the old objects.

But it was slow and difficult, uphill work.

The quarrels of the political leaders still went on. It needed a compelling force from outside, in co-operation with this new spring of internal energy, to fuse the various jarring elements into unity.

CHAPTER XI

THE BOER WAR

"I was against this war, as you know, from the beginning. I am a hundred times more against it now after mixing with the simple, honest, heroic people, who are making the noblest stand ever made in human history for their independence" (Letter to Mr. Stead from Pretoria, 8th April 1900).

THE outbreak of the Boer War provided the necessary compelling force towards unity. A large proportion of the people were already united on the platform of the United Irish League; and just as it had led the people towards unity on all points by finding out the one burning topic on which they could not disagree, so the Irish representatives in Parliament found themselves drawn together insensibly by the sympathy which they all felt for the Boers in their struggle for independence, by the abhorrence which was inspired in them all by the unscrupulous mendacity of method and the unspeakable meanness of motive with which the campaign against that gallant people's independence was conducted. The war thus accomplished something for Ireland, by tending to efface in joint action the memory of years of disunion; but had Ireland been already united and alert, it

might have offered her the occasion of a far greater accomplishment.

For Davitt, the Boer War effected his escape from the narrow precincts of Westminster, and sent him forth again into the broad highways of revolutionary activity. After strenuously opposing, along with the other Irish members, the voting of grants for the war at the sittings of the special autumn session of Parliament summoned to deal with that question, he made a dramatic exit from the House on 25th October 1899, with a speech from the conclusion of which the following extract is taken :—

"It is a war for the meanest and most mercenary of aims which ever prompted conquest or aggression, and it will remain in history as the greatest crime of the nineteenth century. . . . Governments have no Divine commission to knock the word 'not' out of every one of the Ten Commandments. 'Thou shalt not commit murder,' 'Thou shalt not steal,' are as obligatory upon Cabinets as upon citizens. . . . We Irishmen are compelled to give our sympathies to the Boers, because they are absolutely in the right in heroically defending with their lives the independence of their country. . . . I would not purchase liberty for Ireland at the price of giving one vote against the liberty of the Republics of South Africa."

He concluded with the remarkable words which I have placed at the head of the preceding chapter as an epitome of Davitt's parliamentary experience.

His application for the Chiltern Hundreds once sent in, Davitt set about making preparations for

his journey to South Africa. It was not till early in 1900, however, that he actually set out; and before he arrived at the scene of action the relief of Kimberley and Ladysmith and the capture of Cronje were accomplished facts. He stayed in the territory of the Republics from March till May, interviewing all the notable political and military leaders in his capacity as correspondent for American newspapers, and gleaning that minute information as to the earlier happenings of the war which he enshrined in his history of *The Great Boer War*. This book was published, indeed, before the war was actually at an end. Its latter portion consists of little more than a diary of newspaper annals; but it is of inestimable value in the earlier portion, where Davitt is describing his personal experience of the courteous, chivalrous Boers, and the savage methods of warfare adopted, within his own knowledge, by their English opponents. There are some fine battle-pieces in the book, and not a few graphic character-sketches of leading personalities; but as a whole it cannot be said to be written in an attractive style. It was published in 1901, and did much to diffuse, especially in the United States, a knowledge of the true facts both as to the origin of this infamous war and as to the barbarity with which the English had conducted it, forming such a marked contrast to the punctilious, and often quixotic, chivalry displayed by their opponents.

Davitt's sympathy with the Boers was not confined to words. Another man would have

been content with evoking interest and sympathy by his writings for the unfortunate Boers among the Irish and particularly among the American readers of his book; but Davitt was too much the statesman to rest satisfied without at least an attempt at active intervention. On the way out he had as fellow-travellers from Marseilles a band of five young Irishmen, going out from Dublin to join the Irish Brigade in the Boer service. They had, as it turned out, miscalculated the amount of money necessary for the journey, and on reaching Lorenzo Marques Davitt assisted them to complete their journey to Pretoria. But Davitt's great scheme was one much bigger than any plan for sending out inexperienced and undrilled Irishmen. He had passed through France on his way to the seat of war. While there, in conjunction with some Irishmen resident in France, and with some of the many Frenchmen then imbued with a fierce desire to "avenge Fashoda," he arranged for the despatch of a body of trained Frenchmen to the Transvaal, conditionally on Colonel Villebois de Mareuil returning from Africa to lead them. On arriving in South Africa, his first business was to seek out Villebois de Mareuil and to urge upon him to return to France immediately, to put himself at the head of these volunteers, and to recruit others. Davitt pointed out to him that in the warfare on which the Boers were now entering, a warfare conducted by small parties of men thoroughly acquainted with the country, the services of a few European volunteers or officers,

such as Villebois himself, could be of little advantage to the Boers. Only those who had been born and bred in the Transvaal, habituated to the peculiar Boer mode of warfare, could hope to acquit themselves to advantage in the phase of the struggle which was then being entered upon. Therefore Villebois would not be inflicting any serious loss on the Boers by a temporary withdrawal from the combat. In Europe, his name would enable him to assemble without any difficulty a formidable body of volunteers, who, if they arrived safe in the Transvaal under his guidance, could then be employed to restore the favourable conditions under which the Boers had fought at the beginning, with every prospect of being able to drive out of South Africa the British troops, who would be by that time thoroughly demoralised by the harassing attacks of the Boers, and in no mood to face a fresh foe, drilled and disciplined in modern European fashion, and under the command of a soldier with a European reputation for bravery, skill, and resourcefulness. If the French volunteers were intercepted, before they could reach the Transvaal, by the British fleet?—that contingency had also been foreseen and provided for by Davitt. He had reason to believe that such interception would be treated by France as a pretext for active intervention on the Boer side; and—the master-stroke—he had further reason to believe that in that case Germany would at least remain neutral. Not in our time has there been such a magnificent prospect of smashing

up the whole fabric of grasping British imperialism, and of repeating the lesson of the American Revolution, by which the Australian and Canadian colonies profited so largely. And in the consequent weakening of England, in her entanglement in international complications—what a chance for Ireland to wring from her tyrant's difficulties the autonomy which had been refused when the greatest Englishman of his time wished to bestow it with grace in time of peace! Davitt, at all events, never lost sight of this last aspect of the situation.

But the scheme fell through. Villebois de Mareuil would have none of it. He could not conceive that the peculiar tactics of the Boers could possibly enable them to hold out for such a length of time as to render the plan of bringing substantial assistance from Europe feasible. He would simply remain in the field, do his best for the Boers in the altered situation, and await the end. The end for him came quickly. Any hopes that Davitt may have entertained of eventually winning him round to his views (and he was not the man to surrender at the first rebuff) were shattered by the death of this gallant, if reckless, officer shortly after, when, in defiance of the advice of the Boer scouts, he ventured with a handful of men into too close proximity to the enemies' lines.

There was little more for Davitt to do in the Transvaal. He was present at the last sitting of the Volksraad before the English entered Pretoria, and was deeply impressed by the majestic

dignity of the Boer legislators in the presence of disaster, like Roman senators awaiting the inrush of the Gaulish barbarians. In May he returned home. He afterwards took a prominent part in the organisation of an Irish address of welcome to President Kruger on the old hero's arrival in Europe.

He was bitterly disappointed, however, at the failure of the Irish-Americans to rise to the heights of the international situation created by the war. Had the extreme Nationalist organisations in the United States—to whom the virtual collapse of the parliamentary movement there had left a clear field for some years—been properly alert, they could, by throwing a sufficiently large force of American-Irish volunteers into the field, have ensured the definite defeat of the British forces in South Africa. The distrust in the capacity of the heads of these secret societies long entertained by Davitt, which made him feel that it was well that the Land League movement had not been taken up by them when he asked them to do so, was sadly confirmed by their utter failure to make any use of this unequalled opportunity, never likely to recur.

CHAPTER XII

THE LANDLORD RELIEF ACT

"'The Dunraven Treaty,' which most successfully spoiled a radical and final settlement of the Irish land question" (*Fall of Feudalism*, ch. iii.).

THE Convention of June 1900, at which the reunion of the Irish parliamentary forces was cemented by the adoption of the United Irish League, now grown to National dimensions, as the official organisation of the reunited party, and the General Election which followed, found Davitt in the thick of the fight, working steadily and unselfishly as of yore for the welfare of the people. He did not approve of all that was done by Mr. William O'Brien, then dominant in the counsels of the party; especially did he object to the vendetta with which Mr. O'Brien pursued not merely Mr. T. M. Healy but his relatives. But he gave his support unstintedly to the National policy, and helped by his energy at the troublous election period to send back the party as an effective fighting force to the House of Commons; refusing, however, to return there himself.

The land agitation in the west was meantime gaining strength. Mr. Wyndham, the new Chief

Secretary, continued the efforts of his predecessor to suppress it. Proclaimed meetings were a regular feature of the political life of Ireland at this time. Whenever a meeting was thus proclaimed, on the ground of its proximity to a grabbed or evicted farm, or the like, the usual procedure adopted by the people was to dodge the assembled forces of police, and hold the announced meeting somewhere else in the vicinity, or at some other time than that originally announced: occasionally the police would be kept busy half a day following round the crowds who were trying to hold the meeting, preventing them in one place after another from hearing the members of Parliament and others who had come to address them. This procedure, though it gave annoyance to the authorities, was not productive of any tangible results in the way of assertion of the public right of meeting; and it seemed to Davitt altogether inadequate to the requirements of the situation. In reply to a letter inviting him to one of these proclaimed meetings, he wrote expressing his sense of this inadequacy, and pointing out the futility of allowing themselves to be hustled from point to point by the police, with the ultimate necessity of abandoning the attempt to hold a meeting. But he added, that if he should hear, in any of these cases, that a couple of hundred active young men, armed with stout sticks, were prepared to go to the exact spot on which the authorities had forbidden the holding of a meeting, and there to assert by main force their right to hold it—in that event, Davitt said, he would promise

to accompany them, and to take his share of any risks that might be incurred. No one took up his suggestion, unfortunately.

This was the period of the land fight on the De Freyne estate, Co. Roscommon. The course of events on this estate has been so excellently summarised by Davitt in his *Fall of Feudalism* that I shall venture to quote that invaluable volume once more:—

"No reference to this crucial period in the history of the Irish land war can overlook the part played by the tenants on one or two small estates in County Roscommon. They justly complained of high rents levied on poor lands. Their holdings were of the typical Connaught kind, uneconomic generally, with an abundance of better land close by given over to grazing interests. They formed a local combination—confined, in fact, to the tenantry themselves—and, on having their demands for a fairer rent, or for a purchase of the land, refused by the landlords, they went on strike (to pay no rent) against a continuance of the old conditions. They were not advised to this action by the directory of the United Irish League. Its leaders believed it to be a right demand put forward in a wrong way. The tenants were left in their contest to the guidance of local sympathisers, one of whom, Mr. John Fitzgibbon, an old-time Land League leader, proved the sincerity of his sympathy for them by going to prison in their behalf. It was not a successful fight. The owners were Catholics. This circumstance appeared to cover a multitude of landlord sins in the minds of some discriminating Catholic dignitaries whose political charity would scarcely extend to the same lengths in the case of

heavy rents going into Protestant landlord pockets. The landlords secured the moral support of a local bishop, and beat the combination. The fight was, in a sense, a failure, but it was like unto some defeats in a right cause—the victory gained by the landlords and their clerical allies was of a Pyrrhic nature."

Had all the other popular leaders acted at this juncture as Davitt did, the De Freyne fight might not have been even a temporary failure. The "local bishop" referred to, Dr. Clancy, the Bishop of Elphin, did not scruple to use the pulpit on the occasion of religious celebrations for the delivery of violent attacks upon the "immorality" of such combinations as that entered into by the tenants of Lord De Freyne—with whom His Lordship of Elphin was in the habit of dining regularly. It is an axiom of Irish politics, in these degenerate days, that if a bishop praises you, his words are to be called aloud from the housetops, and his wisdom, patriotism, and holiness (whatever that has to do with it) extolled unstintedly. If, on the other hand, you should happen to be denounced by a bishop, the correct tactic is to keep as quiet about it as possible, in the hope that the public may forget about it, or the offended dignitary be appeased in private; never under any circumstances are you to reply, as you would feel bound to do if similarly assailed by a mere layman. It is not a bad tactic, if one's only anxiety is for a quiet life; for to defend oneself with any kind of self-respecting vigour against a bishop (not to speak of venturing to

attack him in your turn) is attended with similar consequences to those commonly said to ensue on thrusting one's hand into a hornet's nest. Davitt, as his whole history shows, had no patience with this skulking policy. He understood how it lowered the prestige of a political leader, and how it tends to encourage the ever-encroaching ecclesiastical power to make greater and greater inroads upon the sphere of the laity. Therefore, while every other prominent man was steadily turning a blind eye to the performances of the Bishop of Elphin, Davitt replied to him with his accustomed trenchant directness. The bishop continued the controversy, in true episcopal fashion, by delivering a speech in which he severely alluded to "anti-clerical Juggernauts," and tried to refute Davitt without ever referring to him by name. Davitt replied, in a letter to the *Freeman's Journal*, in which he swept away the fictitious sanctions under which Dr. Clancy was endeavouring to veil his intolerable attempt to make religion subservient to Tory politics, and to erect the opposition to bad landlords into a moral offence, as Dr. M'Hale had tried to do so long before. The bishop did not venture to reply again. But, as has been seen, his influence was sufficient to bring about the ultimate collapse of the combination—mainly owing to the lack of any other leader and of even a single newspaper to back up Davitt in his manly stand for the rights of the people against aggressive clericalism allied with landlordism.

One of the bravest stands made by Davitt on

behalf of human liberty against clericalism was his defence, on more than one occasion, of the anti-clerical party in France. In Ireland, ignorance on the subject of the relations between Church and State in France is practically universal, and the popular mind is fed up with lurid descriptions of the horrible things that are being done by the French atheists in the name of liberty. This is very convenient for the clergy, for if any Catholic shows a tendency to independence, however slight, it is easy to crush him and to turn popular prejudice against him by suggesting that, even if he is not so very far wrong as yet, he is nevertheless on the way to the same destination as those terrible Frenchmen whom we have all agreed to condemn. This state of things did not reach its climax until after Davitt's death, when the question of the disestablishment of the French Church reached an acute stage; but already in 1902 the dissolution of the religious orders gave rise to a preliminary skirmish, the Irish clergy taking care to emphasise, for the benefit of their flocks, the injustice and "spoliation" involved in this measure. Davitt intervened with a letter, in which he boldly expressed the belief that the Orders were themselves to blame for the condition to which they were reduced, and that the whole attitude of the French Church towards the State had been such as to draw upon it inevitably a retribution of the kind then befalling it. It is true that Davitt's information on the French situation was not adequate; he seems hardly to have been aware

of the extent to which hostility to Christian dogma had gained ground among the French people, and he persisted in regarding them as being merely anti-clerical Catholics, to a much greater extent than was really the case. But he struck the right note in pointing to the actions of the Churchmen themselves as the necessary and sufficient causes of the catastrophe which was then beginning to overwhelm them. His attitude on this question contributed materially to deepen the clerical mistrust of him.

In the autumn of 1901 Davitt was invited to attend the gathering of united Irish societies at Chicago, and crossed the Atlantic for that purpose. Though present in an entirely personal and unofficial capacity, he took occasion to rally the shattered Irish-American organisation on behalf of the parliamentary party and its movement, and paved the way for the mission to the States of Messrs. Redmond, M'Hugh, and O'Donnell shortly afterwards. Again, in the autumn of 1902, he went over for the last time as a political ambassador, to be followed soon after by Messrs. Redmond and Dillon.

He was absent for several months—a period of all-important happenings. Early in 1902 Mr. Wyndham, having failed to procure the acceptance of his first Land Purchase Bill by the Irish members, resorted to coercion in order to suppress the agitation which this disappointment had revivified. Davitt records his belief, in the light of after events, that the Irish

party would have been better advised to accept the Bill of 1902, which was free from many of the cardinal defects of its successor. The coercive measures—jailing members of Parliament, suppressing meetings, and so forth—having failed to stifle the demand for a measure of land purchase on fair terms, Mr. Wyndham resolved to resort to guile. In the autumn of 1902 he appointed Sir Antony MacDonnell, an Indian Civil servant and a protégé of Lord Lansdowne (the same nobleman who had broken with his party in 1881 rather than accept the Compensation for Disturbance Act), to the position of Under-Secretary for Ireland. The immediate object of this appointment was to secure a scheme of land purchase which might save the landlords from their inevitable ruin, and delude the tenants into the belief that they were obtaining most valuable terms. Sir Antony's commission on coming to Ireland also included a scheme for killing Home Rule and destroying the National movement in Ireland for a generation, by calling into existence a "Centre Party," with the aid of which he might fob off on the Irish people a reactionary Council, composed of landlord nominees, as a substitute for Home Rule, and thus restore to the landlord class, the English garrison in Ireland, all that influence in the management of the affairs of the country which the progress of the democratic Land League movement and its successors had step by step taken from them. For the effectuation of this purpose, a prominent Nationalist was needed as a dupe and decoy-duck.

Mr. William O'Brien fell into the snare, was taken in by the plausible professions of Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell, and made himself the active fugleman of the landlord party.

There was another complication in the political situation at that time, owing to the fact that the policy of the Tory Government in the matter of education commended itself to the Catholic bishops, both of England and Ireland, and that therefore the Irish members found themselves compelled on this question to support the Tories against the Liberals. There was a lucid interval, during which Mr. William O'Brien, as temporary leader of the party, took the members away from Westminster while the discussion of the Education Bill was proceeding at the autumn sittings. But a storm was raised. The bishops began to thunder against this dereliction of duty on the part of men whom they had been accustomed to regard as their submissive henchmen. Mr. Redmond, returning from America, found the clerical condemnation of the party's action had reached such a height that he was compelled, after a few brave words and much eloquent endeavour to prove that he stood in the same position all the time, to bow to superior force, and to lead the party back to Westminster to swell the majorities of the Government in imposing a measure of gross injustice on the Nonconformists of England and Wales, theretofore the staunchest supporters of Home Rule. The policy thus embarked upon was carried to its logical conclusion when, in the next session,

the Irish party actually voted for the application of coercion to the Welsh, who were resisting this iniquitous measure.

When this policy was inaugurated, Davitt was unfortunately in America. Instead of returning with Mr. Redmond, he had gone with Mr. Dillon to pursue an extensive tour through the States—his last. The clerical policy was irrevocably decided upon and in great part accomplished before his return. He never concealed his opinion of its disastrous character. To make the Irish party the mere tool of the bishops was bad enough, and certain to be regretted by those who thus placed themselves in their power; to wantonly throw away the friendship of the English Nonconformist democracy, and to ally the Irish National cause with Toryism, was much worse. It was a repetition, with some modification in details, of the mistake made by Parnell seventeen years before when he cast the Irish vote for the Tories, with disastrous consequences. Had the Irish party but held steady at this crisis—had the rage of the bishops been allowed to wear itself out in impotent passion—the independence of the party might have been preserved from the clerical dominance which has not since ceased to exert its authority over it, the sympathy of the English Home Rulers would not have been alienated, and the great Liberal triumph of 1906 would in all probability have been a triumph for Home Rule as well, instead of involving the return of a milk-and-water "Devolutionary" party.

Not only did Davitt find this fatal error com-

mitted, and the time for protest gone by, when he returned from America, but the plot for the "successful spoiling" of the chances of a satisfactory land settlement was also well under way. Here, however, there was still time at least to protest.

Immediately before starting on this last American political tour Davitt had published a pamphlet entitled *Some Suggestions towards a Final Solution of the Irish Land Question.* In this he propounded a scheme for the purchase of all the land of Ireland by the tenants, at reasonable prices, with a homestead-preserving clause and with the reservation of a perpetual rent-charge to the State, as the germ from which, in some future more enlightened age, a system of land nationalisation might grow. The valuable suggestions made in this pamphlet were almost wholly disregarded in the settlement finally adopted; as little heed, indeed, was paid to this important brochure as though its suggestions had been those of a novice, and not of a man who had devoted his life to the Irish people, and in particular to the solution of the Irish land question. But forces were gaining the ascendency in Irish politics to which the free, bold, democratic ideas of Davitt were of all things the most obnoxious.

The famous Dunraven Land Conference had been arranged for before Davitt came home; he was in time, however, to read and criticise its recommendations. These he carefully examined in eight long letters to the *Freeman's Journal*, showing that the concessions made to the landlord interest amounted to a surrender of three-fourths

of the benefits of the previous twenty years of agitation. It was a bitter reflection to Davitt that, after all he had done and attempted to do for the tenant farmers of Ireland, they might yet be induced, at the bidding of an impetuous politician like Mr. William O'Brien, to destroy the value of all his work and to a great extent undo it. He felt bound to strain every nerve to avert such a disaster. The *Freeman's Journal* was his ally in this campaign, and jointly they fought the cause of the tenants, of the ratepayers, of the whole Irish community, against the unholy combination of insinuating landlords and culpably or weakly recreant Nationalists. It was a heavy task, for Mr. O'Brien's eloquence and personal magnetism had reconciled many even of the former stalwarts, many who were speedily to repent of their too-easy confidence, to the abject surrender involved in the terms of the Dunraven Treaty. The most unprincipled attempts were made to closure all discussion, to make the public swallow with open mouth and shut eyes the blessings coming to them from the hands of Lord Dunraven and his friends. Davitt, however, was not to be silenced; neither was the *Freeman's Journal*, to the splendid work of which paper in this emergency Davitt paid high compliment on two occasions: once when closing his discussion of the Conference, immediately before the introduction of the Wyndham Bill; and again at the Convention called, at Easter 1903, to discuss the Bill itself.

That Convention was carefully packed by Mr.

O'Brien, to secure that Sir Antony MacDonnell's Bill should be accepted by it, and the Irish party, in which Mr. O'Brien was still dominant, left with a free hand to act as they pleased upon it in the House of Commons. The counter-proposal, which was urged by Davitt and the *Freeman*, was that the Convention should not indeed reject the Bill (feeling in the country at the delusive prospects held out to them was too high to permit of such a proposition being put forward), but that it should, without either definite acceptance or rejection, draw up a list of essential amendments, instruct the Irish party to do their best to obtain these amendments, and further instruct them to summon a second Convention after the conclusion of the Committee stage of the Bill, for the purpose of considering whether the Bill as amended was satisfactory and might be accepted. This would prevent the Irish party from yielding too easily to the wiles of Mr. Wyndham, and would at the same time have greatly increased the chances of their obtaining the necessary amendments. For the landlords badly wanted the Bill, and the fear lest it might be snatched from their grasp would have rendered them very amenable to reason as to the insertion of the amendments which the Convention declared to be necessary. It would have placed the tenantry in the rightful position of the winning party, willing to wait in the certain knowledge that the game must be theirs in the end, because the landlords, on the brink of ruin and avid of the bonus, could not afford to wait. The exact opposite

of this dignified and prudent attitude was that recommended and personally taken up by Mr. William O'Brien, who boomed the Bill in the most extravagant fashion, and tried to terrorise the tenants into the belief that they must accept it, or they would get nothing. The great fear of the Dunraven-MacDonnell set was lest the country should have any time to consider the Bill in detail, and should wake up to the innumerable defects which have since revealed themselves, but which could not be made clear to the masses of the people without the aid of time. The necessary time to educate the country to the dangers of the Bill would be gained by the proposal to hang it up for the consideration of a second Convention; it would certainly meet in a very different mood from that of the first—it would represent a people awakened from the debauch of Mr. O'Brien's rhetoric. Therefore, it was essential for the successful foisting of this fateful Bill on the Irish people that, above all things, Davitt's resolution, proposing the holding of a second Convention, should be definitely rejected.

This resolution was moved by Davitt under the most unfavourable conditions possible. Mr. O'Brien, an inimitable "rigger," had the arrangements and the ordering of the Convention in his hands. His resolution, accepting the Bill, had precedence; Davitt's had to come as an amendment. He had therefore to address an assembly which was not only carefully selected by Mr. O'Brien's agents, but was in the state of intellectual delirium commonly educed in an Irish crowd by

Mr. O'Brien's intoxicating addresses. To face such an assemblage, at its highest pitch of enthusiasm for Mr. O'Brien, and to take a line directly counter to what Mr. O'Brien had just taken, was a formidable task. No one save a man with Davitt's long record of priceless service to the cause would have been listened to at all. At first there was a moment's doubt as to whether even he would be listened to by the excited multitude. But that tall, stooped figure; that grave, kindly eye; that furrowed countenance; that eloquent, empty sleeve—could not be seen on an Irish platform without producing an impression deeper in its essence than Mr. O'Brien's gesticulatory fireworks could ever effect. And hardly had he begun, in an expostulatory tone, to crave their indulgence, because he feared what he had to say would not be pleasing to them, than a voice rang out from the back of the vast hall: "But we'll listen to you with respect all the same." The effect was electrical. The entire Convention, including the most ardent O'Brienites, burst out into salvos of applause; and from that to the conclusion of a lengthy speech he had not a single inattentive auditor. The speech was a masterpiece of persuasive oratory. Starting with his audience emphatically opposed to him, it was a fascinating study to observe how he gradually worked on their rational faculties, quietly and inoffensively suggested the faults of Mr. O'Brien's proposal, and expounded the advantages of the second Convention scheme amid a growing acquiescence. When he sat down, the applause which

again broke forth was no longer mere compliment to a deservedly reverenced personality; it was the expression of altered conviction. It will always be my belief, in common with many other observers on the spot that day, that if a vote had been taken at that moment, Davitt's amendment would have been carried, and the country would have been spared the infliction of the Wyndham Landlord Relief Act and the weary intrigues for the slaughter of Home Rule which have scarcely yet, after five years, received their quietus.

But the vote was not taken then. The "conciliators" had no intention of submitting the question to the Convention without a fresh attempt to bias the issue. They knew Davitt's weakest point, and struck him there. The Chairman, Mr. John Redmond (who was then "in substantial agreement" with Mr. O'Brien), made a brief speech to the Convention, in which he declared that the issue raised by Davitt was one involving the question of confidence in the party. The contention was preposterous, unless it is maintained that "confidence in the party" is to have no limits, or that the auditing of an official's accounts is necessarily a sign of distrust. It was further said that the passing of this amendment would weaken the party in its fight in the House; whereas all experience goes to show that it could only be strengthened by the knowledge of the other parties that the pressure of a nation was behind its demand for amendments, and that this nation, not its delegates alone, must be satisfied.

On these grounds, however, Davitt was asked to withdraw his amendment. And—he did.

It was an act of folly. But it sprang from that magnanimity which made Davitt unique amongst his contemporaries. Just in such a fashion, under the influence of just such an appeal, had Davitt, twenty years before, withdrawn his amendment to the proposed constitution of the Council of the National League. In each case advantage was taken of his large-heartedness and generosity to induce him to act against his own better judgment. Nor do these instances stand alone. Some writers on recent Irish history, notably Mr. William O'Brien in his *Recollections*, have tried to convey the impression that Davitt was a man continually asserting his views against his colleagues and friends, differing from them almost for the pleasure of doing so, and apt to enforce his individual opinions at critical junctures, regardless of the wishes of the majority. The real Davitt was the exact opposite of all this. If he had had the courage to stand by his own opinions oftener, if he had more persistently asserted the superiority of his judgment (it nearly always *was* superior), he would have been a greater, or at least a more successful, man. But that amiability, that gentleness of spirit, that courtesy —in the finest sense of that somewhat degraded word—which constituted to so large an extent the secret of Davitt's personal charm, made it impossible for him to act with the egotism essential to a successful politician in these hustling days.

Repeatedly, as in this instance, he subordinated his own views to that of others, out of no cowardice or time-serving—there never was man more free from those unlovely qualities—but from a noble dread of friction and of faction, from an anxious care for the welfare of the majority, from a genuine humility and self-abnegation which are amongst the rarest and yet the least valued qualities of humanity.

Thus was the temporary triumph of Mr. William O'Brien and his landlord and Tory allies secured. The Landlord Relief Act of Mr. Wyndham passed through the House of Commons without any substantial amendment in its most objectionable features—nay, without a single division being challenged thereon. But thereafter a "determined campaign" was started against the continuance of the degrading policy of Mr. O'Brien and his friends, a campaign in which Davitt and the *Freeman* had the powerful assistance of Mr. Dillon, now back to Ireland and recovered from the severe illness he had contracted on the American tour. So effective was this campaign against crawling subserviency to the Castle, that Mr. O'Brien resigned his seat before the end of the year, and the Irish party, released from his dominance, swung back into the fighting line. Less success attended the efforts of the democratic section of Irish Nationalists to prevent the farmers from paying impossible prices for the land; far too many of them, disregarding the prudent advice of their leaders, bought at prices so

preposterously exaggerated as to constitute a fresh source of danger to the country in the near future. The most persistent in warning the tenants not to pay these high prices, Davitt was sorely grieved at their comparative neglect of his advice. He was no respecter of persons in his campaign for the tenants, and when the leader of the Irish party set a bad example by selling his estate at high prices, it was Davitt alone who ventured to express the feelings of mistrust and irritation to which such a proceeding gave rise in the popular mind.

Mr. O'Brien returned from his so-called "retirement" in the summer of 1904 simultaneously with the hatching of the Dunraven-MacDonnell Devolution scheme. In a heated controversy in the press, Davitt set out the conclusions of sanity and of democratic politics as against Mr. O'Brien's contentions that the National movement ought immediately to go on its knees to Mr. Wyndham, Sir Antony MacDonnell, and Lord Dunraven. The controversy continued, on the platform and in the press, till the death of Davitt, who all the time was the target for the most unmeasured abuse from Mr. O'Brien, whom he in return treated with the greatest personal courtesy. In spite of his fundamental hostility to the O'Brien attitude, Davitt never forgot that O'Brien had been a great National force in his day, and endeavoured to display as far as possible a kindly toleration for his extraordinary vagaries.

In 1903, shortly after the Convention described

above, Davitt went to Russia as special correspondent of the Hearst papers, to investigate the Kishineff Massacres, then exciting so much interest throughout the civilised world. The choice of Davitt for this mission was a remarkable testimony to the position held by him in the newspaper world as a man of international reputation. He stayed only a short time in Kishineff, but long enough to make a thorough investigation into the facts of the case. His conclusions, summarised in his letters to the New York *American*, were stated by him in more detail in the book which he published on the subject after his return under the title of *Within the Pale*. In respect of style, this is the best of Davitt's books. The tortures inflicted upon the Jews in Kishineff, with the connivance or active assistance of the authorities, gave him such a subject as eminently suited his impassioned pen. The book is an eloquent plea for Zionism. When in Palestine, nearly twenty years before, he had been greatly impressed by that country, and imbued with the idea that something should be done to preserve its unique character. His mind turned at that time towards the idea of making it a kind of common reservation for all Christendom. But when he saw the evils endured by the Russian Jews, he came to the conclusion that the root of their sufferings was the fact that they possessed no national home, no country which they could call their own; and the suggestion that they should be allowed to settle down in Palestine, the original home of their race,

appealed to him irresistibly. That compound of a strong belief in Nationality, the individuality of peoples, with the widest international sympathies, which characterised Davitt, is well brought out in this little book.

Davitt visited Russia several times; in 1904 and again in 1905 he wrote from that country his impressions of the revolutionary crisis to various journals, chiefly American. His views on Russia harmonised better with American notions than with the dominant English line of thought about that country. Davitt was almost as good a Russian as Mr. W. T. Stead. He had no patience with the English Tory who holds up hands in horror at tyranny in Russia, while maintaining a state of things in many respects worse in Ireland. His normally revolutionary sympathies were warped, therefore, by a distrust of English intrigue. The commotions of January 1905 be believed to be largely the work of English agents, or at least of English money, with a view to weakening Russia in the interests of Great Britain and her Japanese allies. The fact that Davitt never mastered the language of Russia detracts to some extent from the value of his impressions of that vast and enigmatic congeries of nations.

For Poland he naturally had a strong sympathy. But he took care to point out, on every possible occasion, that Poland had actually increased in wealth and population under the rule of the Tsar; whereas Ireland was still on a steady down-grade in both respects. For the Jews his sympathies

never flagged. Early in 1904 a bigoted Limerick priest preached a sermon against the Jews, which became the starting-point for a boycott directed against the members of that race in the city of Limerick and its vicinity. Starting on economic grounds, the attack soon developed features of racial and religious bigotry. It took little root, and speedily died away. Davitt was, however, the one public man to denounce it as an outrage upon the fair fame of the Irish people, and to vindicate the Jews, as a race, from the imputations wantonly cast upon them by the pinchbeck inquisitor of Limerick.

The visit of King Edward in the summer of 1903, and the orgy of flunkeyism in which weak-kneed "Nationalists," led by the bishops, indulged, were exceptionally distasteful to Davitt. The customary organs of Nationalist protest were silent on this occasion; the bishops had recognised the English monarch, had received him at Maynooth, and had decorated the walls of the apartment there prepared for him with—*his racing colours!* I was amongst those who felt that some open protest should be made against this lowering of the National flag by the bishops in their insatiate craving for power and privilege; and, having written a letter to this effect to a weekly journal of which I had the entrée, I forwarded a copy to Davitt, with a request that he would give a lead to National sentiment on the matter. In his reply, he expressed full accord with the line I had taken on the subject of the bishops' attitude, but declined to take any action himself in the matter, knowing

its fruitlessness. He had too often been left alone to fight such dangerous battles; and, while he was busily engaged in the combat against the then dominant O'Brienism in the interests of the tenants, he naturally did not wish to complicate the issue by bringing the bishops on his head on a fresh subject of controversy.

Another great task, too, was occupying Davitt's thoughts during the busy year 1903. This was the writing of his account of the land warfare in Ireland as he knew it. The Land Purchase Act which had been passed into law, iniquitous as were many of its clauses, and designed as it was to benefit the landlords rather than the tenants or the community as a whole, nevertheless did finally enshrine in the records of the legislature the principle upon which the Land League was based: that the landlord system should disappear, and an entirely different system take its place. This afforded a fitting opportunity for a review of the forces leading up to the great change from the pen of the man who more than any other was responsible for the transformation of public opinion which had taken place on the subject. *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, published in 1904, is Davitt's history of the land war. It will be the most enduring of his books; it must always be indispensable to the student of modern Irish history, as a narrative of the main struggle of a stirring quarter century of Irish agitation, told by one of the most prominent actors therein. It will always have a value, too, for the reformer everywhere, as furnish-

ing an inspiring record of what can be accomplished by a popular movement of this character. Despite hasty writing in parts (virtually unavoidable, in view of the number of things Davitt was trying to do at the same time), and occasional lapses into too detailed adherence to newspaper records, especially as regards lists of names, it is a great book: vivid character-sketching, impassioned narrative, eloquent pleading, are to be found within its pages. Parnell bulks largely in it; and nothing is more remarkable than the fidelity with which Davitt reproduces the great features of this strange character, and limns with perfect impartiality and justice the man from whom he had so often differed, and whose repeated blunders had done so much to mar the effects of Davitt's work. The chapter in which he sums up the character of Parnell is a masterpiece. No future literary painter of the eponymous hero of the "Parnell Movement" need think to surpass it.

The final chapter, "A Future Racial Programme," embodies Davitt's ideas on the destiny of Ireland. We see here that he never swerved from his earliest ideal of a free Ireland, united with England, as with other countries, by the bonds of commercial and social intercourse solely. This chapter, together with the article written by Davitt in the following year for the *Independent Review*, in which he outlined his ideas of the definitely anti-clerical character which must be given to the coming popular Government in Ireland, form the Bible of the Irish reformer on democratic lines.

The whole of this book, indeed, should be studied by any Irishman who wishes to take an intelligent interest in the affairs of his country: its fearless insistence upon facts which by tacit agreement are usually slurred in Irish discussions; its exposure of the rooted hostility of Rome to the Irish cause; its castigation of the many cowardly anti-National acts committed by the Roman Catholic bishops—those much-belauded pillars of National sentiment—render it *the* book with which either a foreigner or a young Irishman should commence the study of the Irish situation.

My indebtedness to its pages will be obvious to all who have read it, and was indeed inevitable, seeing that it affords a first-hand account of so many of the most important transactions in which Davitt was engaged. But those who desire to know Davitt fully must go to the book itself. In reading it for this purpose, however, it is necessary to keep constantly in mind Davitt's modesty. Transactions in which he bore a leading part are frequently referred to in the most impersonal manner, with nothing to show his own prominence in them save the strenuous endeavour to keep his name out of the record. In this, however, the work but so much the more faithfully represents the character of the man, of whom it will remain the most lasting literary monument.

CHAPTER XIII

THE UNFINISHED CAMPAIGN

"The growing experience of progressive civilisation is coming to see that the American system of universal and free secular education is the best all-round plan yet devised" (Letter to *Freeman's Journal*, 22nd January 1906).

"You and your brother bishops support Castle rule and deny us Home Rule in our own education" (same Letter).

IN 1905 the General Election was looming large upon the political horizon. All political parties were actively engaged in preparing for the titanic struggle. Especially the Labour party was making ready for the victory which was to bring new hope and new life into English politics. Davitt was invited to address a series of meetings in England on behalf of Labour candidates, and gladly consented. Most of those whom he undertook to support were old and tried friends of his; all were good Home Rulers; several were of Irish blood. Nowhere could better work be done for Ireland and for progress than on the field where the leaders of the English democracy were waging war against the forces of privilege on behalf of humanity.

Early in December, then, Davitt proceeded to London, and delivered a few speeches on behalf of Will Thorne, John Burns, and others. His speeches

warned the Irish voters in the districts where he spoke not to be taken in by the fallacies of the Protectionists or by the hypocritical cries about religion with which such strenuous efforts were made to induce the Irish Catholic electors to vote Tory. One of his speeches—that delivered in Battersea—was entirely devoted to the English education question, which had a particular importance in that division. In the main, however, he confined himself to advocating the full Labour programme. In speaking on behalf of Will Thorne, he made the following interesting statement of his attitude towards the Socialists:—

". . . I am not a Socialist myself; I am content to be an Irish Nationalist and Land Reformer; but there are many articles in the political creed of Socialism to which I willingly subscribe. . . . Socialists are not, so far as I can see, either drunkards, gamblers, or wife-beaters. If they were, they would vote Tory, and the churchmen would not denounce them. They are sober, earnest, intelligent citizens, who see clearly the evils of existing systems in their effects upon the industrial and civic lives of the wage-earning masses, and who have the courage to put forward proposed reforms which shall minimise, if they cannot eradicate, these evils in the existence of the labouring poor."

How thoroughly he was in accord with the main articles in the immediate creed of Socialism can be seen by the strong and thoroughgoing policy which, in this same speech, he laid down for the Labour party, for whose return at least fifty or

sixty strong he hoped. Besides Home Rule for Ireland, which he declared, as always, to be an economic as well as a National issue, he advised them to make the following demands upon the attention of the new Parliament:—

"You should demand the concession of a working-man's charter, comprising adult suffrage and the abolition of dual voting, payment of members and of election expenses out of public funds, . . . old age pensions, and the abolition, or radical reform, of the abominable workhouse; the taxation of land values towards this end, and also to facilitate the building of cheap and sanitary dwellings for the working classes in cities and towns; an Agricultural Labourers' Dwellings Act for Great Britain like that in existence in Ireland; and a Land Court for the fixing of agricultural rents for England, Wales, and Scotland, similar to the Act passed for Ireland by Mr. Gladstone and the Irish Land League in 1881. This is no revolutionary programme."

Further, he admonished them not to be too patient with the new Parliament or ministry, but to insist upon the more urgent of their claims being dealt with in the very first session of the new Parliament; failing which, he recommended a line of action similar to that since adopted by the Suffragettes—namely, the stimulation of the lethargic House of Commons by monster deputations.

On the education question he was equally uncompromising. He condemned root and branch the conduct of Cardinal Vaughan and the other

leaders of the Catholic Church in England for linking the cause of the Catholic schools with that of the Established Church schools. This meant, as Davitt showed, the alliance of the Irish Catholics in England with those Tories, like the Duke of Norfolk, who had always been the deadliest enemies of the Home Rule cause, against the Nonconformists, who were the best friends of Gladstone in his attempt to do justice to Ireland. He reprobated in the strongest terms the line taken by the Irish members in allowing themselves to be used as the instruments for the infliction of manifest injustice upon the Nonconformists by the Act of 1902. He recommended a policy of separate action for the Catholics, basing their claim for separate treatment upon the peculiar circumstances of their case, and avoiding all association with the Established Church in its campaign to get control of the education of Nonconformist children. He showed the inconsistency and the inadvisability of a Home Rule party deliberately interfering in a question which was "a Home Rule issue for England and Englishmen," and taking sides against the popular opinion and in favour of the opinion of the "classes."

A succinct statement of his attitude towards the English democracy, from another speech delivered at this time, deserves quotation:—

"I have always based my hopes for Home Rule, since I joined the constitutional movement, upon the support of the English working classes. . . . They have not benefited by the misgovernment of

Ireland, and even now they are not directly responsible for it, because it should not be forgotten that they tried during Mr. Gladstone's glorious campaign to hold up his hands."

Davitt interrupted his English tour for the purpose of attending the Irish National Convention of the United Irish League, which met on the 6th and 7th of December.

This Convention, meeting by a piece of dramatic good fortune immediately after Mr. Balfour's resignation, nevertheless did not rise to the height of the occasion, or display any adequate sense of the momentous issues involved in the imminent election. It was, in fact, too much engrossed in repudiating Mr. William O'Brien to be able to give unequivocal expression to the National expectations on the subject of self-government. Had it done so, much subsequent misunderstanding might have been avoided. Davitt took but little part in the deliberations of this assembly, delivering only two brief speeches, one on each day. The second speech was devoted to the Labourers' question, and contained two noteworthy passages. One gave evidence of his political sagacity with regard to the prospects of Home Rule in the immediate future:—

"I wish I could be as hopeful, as regards the Parliament that is coming into existence, on the Home Rule question as I am with reference to the Labourers' question. I am not going to pin my faith too confidently on the new Parliament with reference to Ireland's National demand. I will

hope for the best, but we have been disappointed so often by English ministries and English parties that possibly your hopes may be disappointed again."

The other passage which I desire to quote sprang out of Davitt's anxiety to conciliate the rising Orange Democracy of Ulster. On the previous day, some references to Mr. Sloan by one of the speakers had been received with groans by the unthinking crowd, who apparently remembered only that Mr. Sloan was an Orangeman, without considering what a good omen of future national unity was afforded by his strongly democratic sentiments and his revolt against the official Ulster Unionist party. Davitt saw the danger of alienating this growing force, which the logic of events was bound to bring more and more into line with the national sentiment of the rest of Ireland, and decided to use his influence to prevent such a deplorable clash of essentially kindred movements:—

"Yesterday reference was made to Mr. Sloan which might be misunderstood by that gentleman and some of his friends, though I don't see how a misunderstanding could take place. We may differ, and we do differ, from Mr. Sloan on many questions, but I am satisfied from a close study of his career that he is a thoroughly honest Irishman, and that he is a sincere democrat, and that he will be found a faithful supporter of the claims of the agricultural labourers in the House of Commons. (Applause.)"

The applause is worth recording, because it came from the same men who had hissed Mr. Sloan's name the day before, and was thus a remarkable tribute to Davitt's personal influence over the Irish people.

No one who saw Davitt at this Convention could possibly have imagined that it was to be his last appearance before such a gathering of his countrymen. Every look and gesture bespeaking alertness and activity; his fifty-nine years of toil and hardship seeming to sit almost lightly upon his tall, stooped frame; his furrowed face illuminated by all his accustomed intellectual keenness—he had the air of a political leader in the prime of his powers; and those who cherished hopes of the development in Ireland of a spirit of genuine National Democracy might well look to him as a leader destined to guide his country on its true path for many years both in the final attainment of national freedom and in the subsequent employment of that freedom to erect Ireland into a great modern and progressive State, free from tyrannies either material or spiritual.

The fatigue which Davitt underwent during the General Election contributed materially to enfeeble him and render him an easier prey for the fatal disease which was so soon to attack him. He devoted himself entirely to the promotion of the Labour cause in Great Britain, rightly feeling that in Ireland, where the supremacy of the Irish party was not seriously challenged, and where the issues at stake in the few contested elections

were mainly of a personal character, his intervention was much less needed than in the constituencies where the voice of the English democracy was at last striving to make itself effectively heard. While recognising the justice of this, however, it is impossible not to regret his absence from Ireland at the time when the Irish party made abject surrender to the bishops by permitting the unopposed return of Mr. T. M. Healy. Had Davitt been in the country, it is at least possible that he might have successfully intervened to prevent this deplorable abdication of its functions by the National party at the bidding of two highly placed ecclesiastics.

Between the 3rd and the 14th of January Davitt addressed nineteen meetings in England and Wales, ranging from Merthyr to Newcastle. His support was not confined to any particular section of Labourites; he spoke for "Lib.-Labs" like Broadhurst, I.L.P. men like Hardie and Jowett, S.D.F. men like Hyndman. In supporting the extreme Labourites, however, he made it a condition that there should be no abuse of John Burns from the platforms on which he spoke. In this he was thoroughly consistent with a career which, from first to last, had been singularly free from those petty personal jealousies and recriminations which make up so large a portion of what the ordinary man in the street, and even the average politician, understands by political activity. He regarded the defeat of Hyndman at Burnley as largely due to the fact that, contrary to the advice

tendered him by Davitt, and after the latter had left Burnley, he waved the red flag too wildly, and attacked John Burns too bitterly.

Home Rule was never absent from Davitt's speeches. He never forgot that, while broad humanitarian sentiment demanded the success of Labour in England as elsewhere, Ireland had a particularly intimate concern in that success, inasmuch as it meant the overthrow of the forces of reaction and privilege which have so long, in the name of the English people, tyrannised over a neighbouring nation in the same spirit as they did over the dumb masses of their own countrymen. And Davitt's exposition of the Home Rule idea, being that of a man to whom all Jingoism and Chauvinism was abhorrent, was peculiarly calculated to recommend itself to the English working classes, however little it might be to the taste of those Irishmen, unconscious disciples of Birmingham, whose Nationality is little more than a form of the "Mafficking" spirit, being inspired by hatred of England rather than by love of Ireland or its poverty-stricken people. Ireland under Home Rule, Davitt was careful to explain, wanted no army or navy with which to pursue an aggressive policy. Internal development on modern lines, with an economic and commercial friendship taking the place of any hostility towards England —this was the end for which he desired Home Rule.

In some of these speeches, notably at Leicester and Stockton, Davitt made use of the following argument for British working-class support of

Home Rule. The quotation is from the Leicester speech of 13th January:—

"If Ireland had obtained Home Rule when Canada did, the population to-day would have been fifteen millions—fifteen millions of an industrious population tilling the land and sending into English markets volumes of cheap food in return for the produce of English mills and factories."

The employment of this *argumentum ad hominem* earned for the pioneer of the modern Irish industrial revival the censure of some of the petty neo-Nationalists who are trying to make the Irish people believe that the ideal of Nationality was never truly understood till the foundation of the Gaelic League, and whose toying with "Irish Revivalism" is diversified by gratuitious attacks on the work and aims of their immediate predecessors. A short but sharp controversy on the subject arose in the *Nationist*, a Dublin weekly which was then expiring in the hands of the "Irish Ireland" fantasts. To this Davitt contributed two letters, from the first of which (*Nationist*, 1st February) I take this brief and sufficient explanation of the point directly at issue:—

"While I never omitted, in any of my recent speeches, to put Ireland's claim to national rule on a basis of national right and justice, I knew enough of English audiences, and of dominant English disposition, not to omit pointing out how

Castle rule had directly injured British commercial interests in more ways than one."

To this the then editor of the *Nationist* replied by insolently sneering at Davitt as "far removed from Irish Ireland," and by setting out the narrow protectionist ideal which the Sinn Fein followers of List are endeavouring to propagate in Ireland. The long letter in which Davitt replied, by its trenchant force and directness, by the unanswerable thoroughness of its exposure of the "Irish Ireland" cant, and by the clearness with which it sets forth Davitt's views—for the last time before his death—on the national question and the future of Ireland, deserves a wider audience than it secured in the columns of the *Nationist*. It is, unfortunately, too long to quote in full, but the following passage cannot be omitted:—

"The corollary of an Irish Ireland, in your sense, is an English England, French France, and American America; all economically secluded from each other's markets, and living an existence of racial and commercial isolation. The parallel to this condition of things would be that of a family in Dublin resolving to be, say, 'Murphyish Murphy,' and determining to grow their own tea, sow and reap their own grain, tan their own leather, and cultivate the timber which would supply them with their own furniture, rather than procure these necessaries in exchange for the fruits of their special avocations.

"My idea of an Irish Ireland is an Ireland as politically independent as we can make it; with all her people well educated—in Gaelic, and in

English, and in as many other languages as they wish to learn; cultivating every available acre of Irish soil, and exporting millions of what we can spare from our own needs to England, or to any other country, and receiving in economic exchange all the useful and needful articles we require; this word 'require' necessarily standing for its proper meaning—what we want and don't make or produce ourselves; for it is often by importing required articles which a country does not manufacture that it learns how, in time, to make them. I would want to see our harbours crowded with ships—English, or any other nation's ships; filled with whatever would tend to make our people and country more prosperous and persevering; knowing that this wealth could not come to our shores except in exchange for its commercial equivalent exported out of the surplus products of Irish labour and skill.

"In this Irish Ireland you would not have butter coming from Denmark, milk from Switzerland, mutton from New Zealand, bacon from Chicago, cheese from Canada, and turf-litter from Holland, as now. We would produce these things more cheaply and abundantly ourselves, and import something else which these countries make and we might not."

In the same letter Davitt dispelled the fallacy that nothing had been done for industrial revival before the days of the Gaelic League, and showed how modern "Irish Irelandism" was too often merely a cloak for hostility to the most practical body. of workers for Ireland—the Irish party. "Irish Irelanders" of the type so soundly castigated in this letter have grown bolder since Davitt's

death, in the absence of any political leader strong enough to assail their unctuous rectitude and to unmask their audacious attempts to establish a monopoly of patriotism. The perusal of this letter would help the Irish public to realise the fundamentally reactionary character of the ideas which are wrapped up in so much patriotically plausible verbiage by the professors of the "Irish Ireland" shibboleth.

The closing campaign of Davitt's stormy life was inaugurated by a letter from the Bishop of Limerick, Dr. O'Dwyer, perhaps the most intolerant and arrogant member of the Irish Catholic hierarchy. This letter, which appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* on 15th January, while Davitt was still in England, was a wild denunciation, in the most approved prelatical style, of the principle of popular control in education, and a severe censure on the Irish party leaders for advising Irish voters in Great Britain to support the party or parties pledged to this principle, instead of lending their aid to the strictly denominational Unionists. Like most Irish episcopal allocutions on political matters, Dr. O'Dwyer's pronouncement was based on the assumption that the Irish party ought as a matter of course to place "Catholic interests" before all things else in considering their policy and tactics. But no Irish parliamentary leader ventured to contest this monstrous assumption 'till Davitt's return from England. Once on the spot, the popular tribune did not hesitate in leaping into the fray. His reply to the Bishop of Limerick appeared in

the *Freeman* on 22nd January. It ran to over three columns, and although not wholly free from that occasional clumsiness of phrasing which Davitt never entirely escaped in his written as distinguished from his spoken compositions, it contained many passages of great vigour, and closed in a strain of genuine eloquence with a prophecy of the triumph of democracy in Ireland. He struck directly at the base of the bishop's position—the indefensible assumption that ecclesiastical privileges and interests are all-important, brooking no rival in public concern:—

"Dr. O'Dwyer is obviously more concerned about these [English] schools than about all the other issues at stake in the General Elections. I am not. Neither are the Irishmen of Great Britain, who have a much better right to think and act even on this schools question than a Bishop of Limerick."

After pointing to the progress made by the Catholic Church in America and Australia as evidence of the absurdity inherent in the alarmist predictions as to the terrible consequences for Catholicity of a system of popular control, he went on to show that, even should these predictions be fulfilled to the letter, the blame would lie on the shoulders of

"the English Catholic bishops and their political director, the Duke of Norfolk, whose smile of recognition is more valued by these respected Church dignitaries than the humble homage ten thousand mere Irish Catholic laymen."

A bold plea for the secular system followed, the tone of which shows that his views had become distinctly more progressive since he wrote *Life and Progress in Australasia*. Then his praises of the secular system were subject to certain doubts and reservations ; now he no longer hesitated. He is quite clear as to the superiority of the plan of joint State-aided secular education with separate religious instruction by the clergy of each denomination. He hinted not obscurely that the Irish clergy were too lazy to undertake this, which should be one of their main duties.

A fearless statement of the facts of the Irish education question, and especially of that thorny branch of it which deals with universities, led up to his peroration on Triumphant Democracy.

Of course the Bishop of Limerick did not reply ; but others attempted that impossible task. The ensuing controversy, remarkable for the manner of its conclusion, was not very remarkable in itself. Davitt had put his best into that first letter, and his subsequent contributions added little of note. He got switched off on to a side-track, with regard to the attitude of the American and Australian hierarchy towards secular education. He unfortunately tried to prove that these prelates were less antagonistic to secular education than their brethren at home, a position which he was incapable of sustaining by adequate evidence.

His third letter, on 6th February, defended the American public school system, and condemned

the wrong and injustice involved in the Catholic boycott of it. He then contrasted this with the primary school system of Ireland under clerical control, and gave a scathing denunciation of the latter. He showed, too, how the episcopal boycott of T.C.D. and the "Godless" Queen's Colleges was directed only against the poor, while the rich who defied the ecclesiastical prohibition were tolerated and even received with open arms. Finally, he defended himself from the malicious charge of "ingratitude" towards the bishop and priests of Meath:—

"It was not I who sought the political approval or aid of bishops or priests. It was they, unfortunately, who sought me, and left me subsequently —in the Bankruptcy Court."

A good illustration of the kind of Irishmen who ranged themselves on the clerical side is furnished by the fact that one of them actually attacked Davitt for his championship of the Boers, on the ground that this needlessly alienated English feeling. Indeed, the tone of all his opponents steadily grew more acrimonious as the controversy proceeded. The bitterest language was used with regard to Davitt personally; his whole past record was sneered at in a contemptible fashion, and he was virtually asked what right he had to venture to give any opinion on the question at issue. Davitt, who was always a forceful controversialist ("When I am attacked, I strike back," he told the Court during the hearing of the Meath Election

Petition), replied, naturally, with his accustomed slashing vigour.

The Bishop of Limerick again appeared in the field on 10th February; not to encounter Davitt directly, however, or in any way to follow up the controversy which he had virtually started, but to make a fresh attack upon the Irish party for allowing the Liberals to be returned, and to give warning, in the most explicit terms, of what the clerical party expected the members to do with regard to the coming Education Bill. There must be, he declared, "a real fight; no sham battle; no private understanding with ministers; but from the day the Bill is introduced until it leaves Committee, if it ever does, the tenacious, enthusiastic opposition of men who are fighting for principle, *and for the dearest interests of their race.*" The letter was written with great power, and Davitt again flung himself into the breach to counteract its mischievous effects. He published a fourth letter in the *Freeman* on 12th February, in which he commented on Dr. O'Dwyer's changed tone since the letter of 15th January was written,—the Irish members being no longer traitors, but the trusted guardians of clerical interests,—and warned the Irish party not to trust his seeming friendliness. He exposed the injustice of the Act of 1902 towards the Nonconformists; outlined his plan of separate treatment for the Catholic schools; gave a brief but weighty historical retrospect of the evils wrought in Ireland by the clerical domineering spirit from the days of Pope Adrian IV. to those

of the Brass Band; recalled the hostility of some Irish bishops, and notably Dr. O'Dwyer, to the Irish Christian Brothers—an antagonism forcibly contrasting with their anxiety for religious education in Great Britain; and concluded a three-column letter with a fine philippic against the episcopal Toryism which lay at the root of Dr. O'Dwyer's dissatisfaction with the electoral results:—

"A conscientious regard for religion and Catholicity indeed! No, Mr. Editor, it is not that which inspires the zeal of English Catholic leaders and of some of their Irish episcopal allies on this schools question. It is the eternal hungering after political influence and temporal power; the meddling and bungling in secular affairs; the assumption of authority to dictate to laymen what they shall think or do in the affairs of the nation; the monetary power and control of public schools; the rule or ruin of universities; and, above all, a close alliance with the aristocracies and classes of society. These are the very aims and ambitions which have reduced the Catholic Church in France to-day to the pitiable position which it occupies before the world."

As before, the Bishop of Limerick, having shot his bolt, relapsed into silence, and allowed or instructed others to carry on the warfare against Davitt and democracy. Column after column of abuse of Davitt appeared in the *Freeman*—one "controversialist" comparing him to Martin Luther; another descanting on his "ignorant, virulent spirit"; and a third, obviously inspired from the Palace, Limerick, remarking on the shocking fact

that he was "in sympathy with the International Socialists, who know neither country nor religion." But Davitt was not afforded any further opportunity of replying to his enemies. The holy season of Lent was at hand; that was the determining factor in the hierarchy's choice of weapons with which to crush the champion of human liberty against their boundless pretensions. A privileged tyranny, constitutionally incapable of withstanding truth and justice in open encounter, invariably resorts to the simpler method of silencing its opponents whenever there is any possibility of doing so. The Lenten pastorals, besides exhorting the faithful to penitence and good works, were to be employed to muzzle the man who had dared to foretell the triumph of democracy in Ireland, and the machinery of the spiritual mission unscrupulously pressed into the service of a campaign against a political opponent.

The Lenten pastorals were read in the churches on Sunday, 25th February, and the more important portions of them were published in the press on the following day. That portion of Bishop O'Dwyer's allocution which was devoted to the education question filled over five columns of the *Freeman*; and although Davitt was not referred to by name, the whole of this space was taken up with an examination of Davitt's position and a vehement and sweeping condemnation of it. "A recent pronouncement which the Catholics of Ireland have read with pain and indignation,"—"the uninformed assertions of Anglo-Irish Socialists,"—

such were the terms in which Davitt was alluded to without explicit mention. But the Bishop of Limerick's excessive vehemence is apt to defeat its own end; even amongst the clerical party his uniform bad temper discredits him as a serious advocate. His tirade, therefore, could only have stimulated and not terminated the controversy. The crushing blow had to come from another quarter. The foaming cataract from Limerick overshot its mark; a weighty waterspout from a different source descended with irresistible force on the daring secularist.

The Lenten pastoral of Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, contained the following passage:—

"A great and growing evil of the day is the facility afforded by the newspaper press, in Ireland as in other countries, to persons lamentably uninformed in such matters to give widespread publicity to discreditable attacks upon the teaching and upon the rights of the Church in reference to matters such as education. At times, too, through the publication of such writings, newspapers are made use of to give currency to gross misrepresentations of the views and actions of some of the most eminent and widely venerated ecclesiastics of the Catholic Church. Much harm is done by such publications, for, especially amongst the less intelligent and less educated class of newspaper readers, the mischief done by them cannot be counteracted by even the most effective replies."

This flagrant misuse of ecclesiastical authority for political purposes, and the unabashed denial of the elementary liberties of speech and of the

press, which in a free country would inevitably have led to a storm of popular indignation, not merely evoked no public protest whatever, but were completely successful in accomplishing the silencing of Davitt. No more letters from him appeared in the *Freeman's Journal*; and not because he did not write any.

The *Freeman's Journal* has a long, and on the whole an honourable, record of National service for Ireland. Its strenuous and unrelenting campaign against the swindling Land Act of 1903 merits in an especial manner the gratitude of the Irish people. To its steady four years' opposition to the Devolution conspiracy must be largely ascribed the collapse of that conspiracy in the rejection of the Irish Council Bill of 1907. In justice to this great newspaper, therefore, I deem it right to set forth here the *Freeman's Journal* side of the case—a side with which I was unacquainted when I first made public (*Independent Review*, September 1906) the fact that Davitt's last letter had been denied insertion in the *Freeman*.

The non-insertion of this letter (written immediately after the appearance of the pastorals and in reply to them) was due, not to a direct refusal to publish, but to an editorial request for certain omissions and modifications, to which Davitt refused to consent. These alterations, in the *Freeman* view, were necessitated by the personally offensive tone of certain references to Davitt's episcopal opponents.

When the letter in question is published, as it will be, the public will be enabled to judge whether it really contained anything which could be called offensive except by those who regard vigour in the conduct of a controversy as equivalent to abuse. Meantime, there is this question to be considered: Would the *Freeman's Journal* have refused publication to, or requested the alteration of, a letter from any bishop, howsoever abusive it might be towards a lay opponent? The question has only to be posed to reveal the inadequacy of the *Freeman's* defence.

Closured in the press, Davitt decided to publish a pamphlet on the education question—a project which was frustrated by his fatal illness. But that was not the only or the most important plan which the democratic leader was working out at the time when the hand of death put a premature end to his career. He contemplated the establishment of a great Irish National and democratic weekly paper. The *Irish Democrat* was to have been, in the first place, a *news*paper of a high standard, which by its ample and accurate records of events of Irish interest would furnish a bond of union between the scattered members of the Irish race all over the globe. Davitt's name as editor would, of course, have enabled it to fulfil this object from the start, by immediately giving the paper a large circulation amongst the Irish of America and of Australia, by whom he was so well known and loved. But the paper was also to carry on a propaganda for the ideas of nationality and democracy, inseparably associated in Davitt's

mind. Uncompromising in its National principles, it would also have been, to an extent that no Irish paper is to-day, the equally unflinching exponent of democratic ideas. Especial stress was to have been laid upon the education question, and on this ground the clergy's opposition to Home Rule in education would have been mercilessly fought. In this respect the paper would have marked a "New Departure" not less important in its essence and in its probable fruits than that initiated by the same powerful and courageous intelligence thirty years ago. Just as in 1878 Davitt saw that the cause of Irish national independence was indissolubly bound up with the overthrow of the landlord power, so now he perceived, what too few Irishmen have yet grasped, that the success of the National cause is bound up with the overthrow of the secular power of the hierarchy. Though never stooping to that slavish subserviency with which some Irish leaders have deemed it advisable to buy the support of the bishops for the National movement, Davitt had yet believed, in common with most Nationalists, that it was both possible and desirable to postpone the inevitable struggle against their encroachments until Home Rule had left Ireland mistress of her own household, so as to avoid internecine conflict in the face of the common enemy. But he had now come to perceive that there was no longer a common enemy; that the ecclesiastical power, taken as a whole, was ranged on the side of England; that a glorious exception like Archbishop Croke was daily becoming a more

improbable phenomenon; that concurrently with the overthrow of the landlord garrison England was building up for herself a new garrison in the Catholic hierarchy; and that this new garrison must be fought in the same spirit as the old one had been, as an essential part of the fight against English domination all along the line. It would no longer do to say (as so many "clericals" in outward seeming are constantly saying in private), "Wait till we get Home Rule, and then we will deal with these turbulent priests," for the prospects of Home Rule itself were being gravely damaged by the clerical dominance. A deep and growing sense of this is manifest in all Davitt's utterances of this latest time. Again and again he recurs to the disastrous consequences of the Irish party's action in supporting the Education Bill of 1902 and in voting for the coercion of the Welsh Nonconformists. Again and again he reminds the Irish people (what their other leaders, for obvious reasons, have for the most part been carefully concealing from them) that this is the chief cause of the accession to power of a Liberal Ministry unpledged to Home Rule, and the success of the Devolution conspiracy thus far. But a single sentence from a private letter of Davitt's will illustrate his views more clearly than anything else. It is from a letter written on 9th February 1906 to the Rev. J. O. Hannay, author of *The Seething Pot* and other novels:[1]—

[1] I am indebted to Mr. Hannay for permission to publish this and the next extract.

"I expect great things from your hero in the next story, and hope to see him as a Constitutional Wolfe Tone, leading the Protestant Nationalists and independent Nationalist Catholics against the *coming English garrison — the Roman Catholic hierarchy*, Orangemen, and pro-English loyalists."

In another letter to Mr. Hannay, written on 4th April, when the shadow of death was already lowering upon him, Davitt wrote as follows with regard to the Irish education system as maintained by the clergy, and its ruinous effect upon the industrial progress of the country :—

"Yes, the question of the Canadian cattle is a serious one for the country. I have warned the tenants again and again during the last ten years that the restrictions against importation could not always be upheld, and that this fact should be seriously considered by them when buying their holdings. It was all in vain. Nothing short of absolute danger or necessity will rouse them out of their dirty, slovenly habits of living from hand to mouth, a shiftless, thriftless, ignoble existence.

"When I return home from little countries like Denmark, Holland, and Belgium, it makes me mad to look on at the criminal misuse of the best land in Europe, which you see in our midland counties and around here where I live. Next (in my view) to the long experience of English rule, I blame our whole education system for this economic ruin of our fertile soil. It has scarcely any relation to the industrial needs of the country; and yet because it is supposed to be, in some mysterious way, a safeguard for 'Faith and Morals,' our bishops—and I fear yours too—are standing in the way of efficient reform.

"One would like to know . . . what the Devil's private view about 'Faith and Morals' that are protected by ignorance and a slovenly social life really is."

What Davitt proposed to substitute for the present Irish education system is clearly pointed out, not merely in his last letters, but also in the article which he contributed to the *Independent Review* about a year before his death, in which he foretold the victory, under a Home Rule Government, of a united National Democratic and Labour party :—

"The National Democrats and the Labour candidates were outspokenly insistent in demands for efficient, as against wasteful, instruction, from the primary schools upwards to the best-equipped system of higher education that a New Ireland could organise and support. . . . It was demanded that Irish teaching should be national rather than denominational, and that the people who paid for the secular training of their children should exercise complete financial and administrative control over the entire co-ordinated system of education in Ireland."

Had Davitt lived to found his paper and to start his campaign against the hierarchy and the rest of the garrison, with the young manhood of the country rallied to his banner, the petty faction fight between parliamentarians and Sinn Feiners would have been overwhelmed beneath the onrushing tide of democracy, and, as in 1878, the existing political leaders would probably have seen

themselves compelled either to join Davitt's movement or to stand down and out. But all these fair prospects were blighted in a moment by the finger of Fate falling on the one man in Ireland who was capable of realising the hopes of Irish democrats.

On the 5th of March Davitt attended and spoke at the Town Tenants' Conference in the Dublin Mansion House. It was his last public speech. He praised the practical, business-like character of the gathering, and contrasted it with the dulness and lack of initiative of the average Irish "Convention," inasmuch as this Conference was assembled, not to listen meekly to the advice of a few leaders, but to give those leaders clear and definite instructions as to the needs of the people whom the delegates represented. His speech travelled beyond the narrow programme of the Town Tenants' League, and dealt with the roots of the problem of the towns—the taxation of land values and the housing of the working classes. He expatiated on what Germany had done for the solution of the housing problem, and showed how this question was bound up with the transit question: only under a nationalised railway system could it be expected that facilities would be given to the worker to live in healthy surroundings, by the provision of cheap and suitable means of conveyance to and from his work. He paid a special compliment to Mr. Lindsay Crawford, the Independent Orange leader, who had spoken at an earlier stage of the proceedings, and expressed the hope that he would soon be found represent-

ing the Protestant democracy in the House of Commons.

Towards the end of March Davitt heard of a "painless dentist," whom he resolved to try for the removal of some teeth which had long troubled him with recurrent neuralgia. He first had one tooth extracted, and then, so pleased was he with the painless operation, returned a few days later to get out some more. One of the teeth thus removed was the stump of one which had been broken during Davitt's imprisonment by a brutal and careless warder who acted as prison dentist. The broken remnant of a tooth gave Davitt trouble during all his subsequent life, and it was its extraction that killed him at last. The hand of the English Government, so relentlessly hostile to the fearless patriot all through his life, is thus distinctly, though distantly, traceable in the manner of his death.

Going on with his work as usual after the dental operation—reading in the National Library and attending the meetings of the U.I.L. Directory—without taking any precaution against cold, Davitt speedily contracted an attack of influenza, and, what was more serious, septic inflammation of the lower jaw, which resulted in an extensive abscess and the destruction of a portion of the jawbone. He had suffered for about a fortnight before his friends were aware of his illness. At Easter, a dinner invitation from Mr. John Dillon brought a reply from Davitt stating that he was too ill to accept. Mr. Dillon at once visited his friend, and

found him in an alarming condition. Mr. Dillon, who himself holds a medical qualification, strongly urged, and procured, the consultation of a specialist. An operation was accordingly performed on Easter Tuesday, 17th April, with apparently successful results. The improvement in Davitt's condition was maintained for nearly a month. During this period two events occurred, both of a tragic nature, which touched him nearly: the death of his old friend and fellow-worker, John Ferguson of Glasgow; and the appalling earthquake at San Francisco, where both he and Mrs. Davitt had many friends. From his deathbed Davitt was one of the first and most generous subscribers to the Mansion House Fund for the relief of the San Francisco sufferers.

A second operation becoming necessary, he was removed to a private hospital in Mount Street, where the affected portion of the bone was taken out on 15th May. It was the bulletin describing this operation which for the first time made the general public aware of the grave character of his illness. Even after this, however, hopeful medical reports were issued for nearly a fortnight. It was on Sunday, 27th May, that his condition was definitely recognised as dangerous. The tragedy of his approaching end was deepened by the serious illness of his wife. Mrs. Davitt, though in a delicate state of health, hastened, on receiving the news of her husband's critical condition, to the hospital, and there, before she had even seen her husband, was suddenly taken ill. A premature confinement

followed. During Davitt's dying moments, consequently, his wife lay in an upper room, helpless and unable to approach or comfort him in his last agony.

At Davitt's special request, when he was informed of his dangerous condition, Father John M'Cartan, P.P., Aughagallon, was urgently summoned to administer the last Sacraments of the Catholic Church. The end was not long delayed. At midnight, between the 30th and 31st of May, the great progressive leader quietly breathed his last. Mr. John Dillon, closest of his personal and political friends, was with him to the end. A few other close friends, and his eldest son and namesake, were also present at the final scene. Davitt was a few weeks past his sixtieth birthday.

The grief of the nation desired to find expression in a public funeral; but it was characteristic of the man who all his life had steadfastly declined personal honours or public testimonials that his will was found to forbid the payment of even this last tribute. That will is a document so illuminating in its final expression of Davitt's lofty and magnanimous nature, that its salient passages must be quoted:—

". . . Should I die in Ireland, I would wish to be buried at Straide, Co. Mayo, without any funeral demonstration. If I die in America, I must be buried in my mother's grave at Manayunk, near Philadelphia, and on no account brought back to Ireland. If in any other country (outside of Great Britain), to be buried in the nearest graveyard to

where I may die, with the simplest possible ceremony. Should I die in Great Britain, I must be buried at Straide, Co. Mayo. My diaries are not to be published as such, and in no instance without my wife's permission; but on no account must anything harsh or censorious written in said diaries by me about any person, dead or alive, who has ever worked for Ireland, be printed, published, or used so as to give pain to any friend or relative. To all my friends I leave kind thoughts; to my enemies the fullest possible forgiveness; and to Ireland the undying prayer for the absolute freedom and independence which it was my life's ambition to try and obtain for her. I appoint my wife, Mary Davitt, the sole executrix of this will.

"Dated this first day of February, one thousand nine hundred and four. MICHAEL DAVITT."

All Davitt is there—the relentless warrior against English rule, who cares not in what country his bones may lie, so long as it is not England; the high-minded, chivalrous public man, whose many fierce public encounters left him unstained by the faintest trace of personal animosity or vindictiveness; the patriot whose last thought, like his first, was of his country and her future.

But, though a public funeral was impossible, the people found an opportunity of expressing their sense of the national loss. On the evening following his death, Davitt's remains were transferred from the hospital to Clarendon Street Church—selected because of its reception of the body of poor M'Carthy when every other church in Dublin closed its doors against the dead Fenian. There

was no intention of making this conveyance of the body across the city the occasion of any procession or ceremonial; there was no public notice that it was to take place, beyond a casual mention in the evening papers a few hours previously; but the masses of the Dublin people—those whose hours of work would not permit them to be present at the subsequent funeral procession—turned out spontaneously to honour the dead rebel. The magnitude of the crowds that followed the hearse and afterwards thronged to suffocation, not once only, but by several relays, the spacious church where the coffin was deposited, testified in a remarkable manner to Davitt's hold upon the affections of the people. He had always stood for the rights of the poor, exploited wage-slave. But anyone mixing in that crowd could not fail to become aware that it was not that aspect of his career that they were primarily dwelling upon: it was the fact that he was, first and last, a rebel against English rule which was constantly present in the minds of the toilers who gathered to do honour to his remains.

One other such manifestation there was of the people's feeling towards their great champion: it was by the grave at Straide when his remains were laid in the earth of his native county, hard by the spot where landlordism in action had revealed its inhuman cruelty to his infant mind over fifty years before, when the people of Mayo, whom he had first banded together to fight and destroy that diabolical power, assembled by the grave-side

of the prophet who had led them out of the wilderness.

There were many touching, and some significant, messages of regret. There was a wreath from the Jewish Community of Dublin, in grateful remembrance of Davitt's efforts on behalf of the one race which has suffered more than the Irish. Kindly messages were sent by some old enemies, and empty carriages by some old friends. There were appreciations from men of prominence all over that Greater Ireland which is coextensive with the English-speaking world—and not from men of Irish blood alone. There were resolutions and telegrams without number. But of all the testimonies to the magnitude of Ireland's and the world's loss, which poured forth so abundantly in those first days of sorrow, none are so well deserving of remembrance as the simple and spontaneous demonstrations which revealed the place held by the dead patriot in the hearts of the Dublin artisan and of the peasant of Mayo.

CHAPTER XIV

DAVITT AS PROPHET OF THE FUTURE IRELAND

"Make no mistake about it, my Lord Bishop of Limerick, Democracy is going to rule in these countries" (Letter to *Freeman's Journal*, 22nd January 1906).

To those contemporaries of Michael Davitt who lived with him through the stormy times sketched in the foregoing chapters this book must needs seem imperfect and inadequate; but for such as these it is not primarily written. It is meant above all for the young—for the youth of Great Britain and other countries, that they may learn something of the greatest Irishman of the nineteenth century, and may be led to an appreciation of his ideals; for the youth in Ireland, that they may understand how the difficulties which lie in the path of the reformer were confronted by Davitt, and how fearlessly he faced the bugbears which now seem to have power to cow the boldest. It is meant, too, to stimulate them to a closer study of the man and his work.

The future is shapen of the dreams of idealists. The future Ireland cannot fail to be largely woven out of the dreams of Michael Davitt. Already giant strides have been taken, Davitt, as practical

idealist, himself leading as well as pointing out the way towards the realisation of his hopes. In proportion as the remainder are similarly crystallised into realities will the Ireland of the future be a land wherein it is good to be alive. In proportion as his spirit guides and directs the generation which is now learning the rudiments of political and social action will Ireland progress away from the backward position in which she now stands.

The first essential characteristic of Michael Davitt's outlook upon the world was that it was free from the spirit of hate. Wrong, injustice, tyranny—these things indeed he hated with an ardent and a holy hatred. But for persons and peoples he had no feeling of hate. Not even England, which had treated him so badly; not even individual bad landlords, though the evils of landlordism had eaten into his soul—could inspire him with such a sentiment. Love for the people was the mainspring of all his action: for the dumb suffering masses everywhere; for his own people first, but with no narrow or exclusive love that would limit or restrain his sympathies, otherwise than as some limitation is the condition of all action. Counsels of despair, of hatred towards England, of revengefulness, were constantly mooted in his golden prime, and steadfastly combated by him. Firm as a rock in the manly self-respect of his attitude towards England, —scouting as unworthy the weak attempts of latter-day conciliators to lower the national flag,— he nevertheless was prepared at any moment to

grasp the hand of friendship should the English people once extend it; the only condition being that he would first ascertain beyond all possibility of doubt that the offer was sincere. For, though he had a fellow-feeling for the masses of the English people, for the statesmen through whom their offers come he entertained a profound mistrust. Gladstone, by his great offer of 1886, conquered this distrust, and won Davitt's lasting admiration; yet even in the days of Gladstone he was watchful lest any premature inter-communion with English Liberals should weaken Irish independence. Self-respect and self-confidence, neither hating nor fearing, was the temper he wished to see in Ireland. Alike in times of hope, when plausible promises tend to make the volatile Irish fall on the necks of English statesmen, and in times of despair, when treacherous or cowardly hesitation by Englishmen reinforces the party of hatred,—never quite dead in Ireland,—should the essential wisdom and sanity of Davitt's attitude be studied and imitated.

Loving the people as he did, and regarding the alleviation of their sufferings as the only thing which can make political life worth while, Davitt's Nationalism was always of an uncompromisingly democratic character. National parties are too often led by men representative of petty privileged classes, who desire to be free from any controlling power, that they may be able to give the freer scope to their own will. Nationalism of this kind is bound to die; the awakened social conscience will no longer permit of its existence. A Nationalism

which, like that of the Magyar nobles, aims mainly at the prevention of the spread of democratic ideas among the people, stinks in the nostrils of Europe. That Irish Nationalism has been so successful, and has retained the sympathy of the civilised world outside the ruling classes in Great Britain, is due to the close connection which has existed, for the most part, between it and the democratic movement; a connection which in its turn was due to the fortunate circumstance that Ireland has long ceased to have any native aristocracy, and that consequently its gentry have been compelled in self-preservation to ally themselves with England. Davitt, with his simultaneous attack upon the English and upon the feudal power, was the type of this happy alliance between Nationalism and Democracy, an alliance the severance of which means the destruction of the whole National movement—for Democracy will not suffer by the breach. Those who would cringe to the landlords as the "natural leaders" of the people, and those who, indulging in an impossible and undesirable dream of an Ireland absolutely homogeneous and united, deprecate "class war," are the people with whom the followers of Davitt can have no compromise. They seek to deprive Nationalism of its very salt and savour, nay, to take from it its sole justification for existence. For if the free Ireland which we seek is to be run in the interests of any privileged class, wherein is it worth the seeking?

Therefore, as a democrat, Davitt was a supporter of adult suffrage (and "adult" with him did

not mean "male" only—less than a year before his death he signed a memorial inviting the Irish Nationalist members to support the Women's Suffrage Bill then before the House), of payment of members, of the single-chamber system of legislation; not out of any pedantic attachment to particular forms of government in a doctrinaire fashion, but because he saw that only by the free and full participation of the whole people in the government of any country could the supremacy of class and sectional interests be prevented or neutralised. He valued these things for their educative effect upon the individual exercising power through them, but much more as the instruments for the social regeneration of the proletariat. Davitt was a man of the poor; poor individuals, poor communities like the Connaught peasants, poor nations like plundered Ireland, awoke the whole of his volcanic enthusiasm for redress. And after all, what is democracy, in its ultimate aspect, but the fairer distribution of the goods of this earth among the dwellers thereon—the elimination of the very rich and the very poor? Davitt was not a Socialist; he was too deeply imbued with the love of individual liberty not to share to some extent the apprehensions of Herbert Spencer—a philosopher for whose social theories he had the greatest admiration—as to possible restrictions of human liberty under a Socialist régime. In particular, the semi-militarist, semi-imperialist Socialism of the Fabian school repelled him. But every one of the practical claims put forward by the

various Socialistic parties to-day commanded his hearty support. He was just the man who, in a free Irish state, might have been the leader of a humanised Socialist party, which should concentrate its immediate efforts upon practical reforms instead of upon the propagation of a creed. He spoke, at the General Election of 1906, for every variety of Labour candidate, from John Burns to Hyndman; and an alliance between the Irish and the Labour parties was the dream of his later years. To cement that alliance must be the first task, in external politics, of Irish democratic Nationalists. To keep in mind, for the rest, that the aim for which a legislative assembly in Ireland is demanded is to put the people in a position to carry out, free from foreign interference, just such a programme as that of this Labour party, adapted as it may be found necessary to Ireland's pressing requirements—this is the secret of successful conduct of the country's internal relations, and of right choice between rival prophets of Nationalism.

Davitt's earnestness, courage, and sincerity made political opportunism ever repugnant to him. Opportunism in politics is a term that is used to cover a great variety of attitudes, ranging from that of the "arriviste," whose selfish aims deserve a baser name, to the wise recognition of the limitations of time and place which mark off the politician from the purely speculative philosopher. Between these limits there is a wide field in which opportunism properly so called displays itself, its distinguishing mark being readiness to betray one

principle in order to secure the triumph of another. This common variety of opportunist we have always with us in Ireland. In the case of a weak nation contending against one so much stronger, he finds a congenial situation for the unfolding of his maxims. His manifestations are protean. Sometimes he warns us to keep our democratic ideas in the background, or to be false to them, in order to secure the support of the bishops for the National cause. Sometimes he would have us palliate the acts of the irresponsible bureaucracy which governs Ireland, because they happen for the moment to be exercised in the name of a *soi-disant* Liberalism. When England engages in a monstrously unjust war, he would have us exhibit sympathy towards the Empire in its peril, in the hope of extracting some concession from our masters' gratitude. When the English King visits our shores, there are never wanting opportunists to urge us to make a show of friendliness to him, veiling disloyalty to the English connection under decently hypocritical garb. Or again, some "uncompromising" Nationalist will sing the praises of German militarism, merely because it is deemed to be in opposition to the British power. There are degrees of obnoxiousness in these various forms of an obnoxious theory; but in their essence all are alike unworthy. Perhaps the average politician will never wholly be cured of them save by the conviction that they do not pay; that in politics, as elsewhere, honesty is the best policy in the long-run—nay, in politics more than else-

where, inasmuch as results cannot be measured by the observation of a single generation. But the example of a man like Davitt, who from the simple standpoint of principle rejected all these demoralising opportunisms, must ever be a powerful influence to prevent Irishmen from straying out of the straight path of justice and consistency. The keynote of Davitt's character in this sphere is given by his words on leaving the House of Commons, when he declared that not for the liberty of Ireland would he consent to express any approval of the Boer War. There are many Irish politicians who will frankly tell you that for the liberty of Ireland they would consent to anything whatever. They can only be answered by telling them that in that case they will never deserve that liberty. The Ireland of Davitt's love was ever supremely deserving.

Different as are the immediate needs of different peoples, and wholly beneficial as is therefore the division of labour at present brought about through the coexistence of independent nationalities, the fundamental oneness of the human race requires that progressive parties everywhere should, for the sake of their own existence and health, observe at least a friendly neutrality towards each other. It is impossible to oppose coercion in Ireland and to vote for it in Wales. It is impossible to be a non-sectarian party in Ireland and a "defender of Catholic interests" in England. These things have been done; but, representing a state of moral impossibility, they can only be the fleeting

symbols of a transitory reality. The party which is reactionary in its foreign relationships will inevitably find itself drawn into the maintenance of reaction at home. Into that pit the Irish party must fall, unless it can clear itself from the stain of clericalism which rests on it.

The Irish Nationalism of which Davitt is the type is necessarily anti-clerical. Owing to the absence of any popularly controlled system of education in Ireland, young Irish men and women in each generation have to grow up ignorant of the true state of affairs in Ireland, in particular of the hostility of the clerical power to their National aspirations; and are deluded into the belief that the priests are the "natural leaders" of the people —the same cant which in other quarters is employed about the landlords. That is why a copy of Davitt's *Fall of Feudalism* should be put into the hands of every young man and woman in Ireland. Davitt never had any illusions as to the fundamental and unchangeable hostility of Rome to the national independence of Ireland, which would deprive her of a powerful Catholic party at the centre of British power and would render possible in Ireland those developments of popular liberty to which Rome is everywhere inimical. That the bishops and clergy too were in the main only concerned to use the National movement for their own purposes was a truth never forgotten by Davitt; nor did he ever adopt the craven policy of silence when the cloven hoof was shown by some too arrogant cleric. But in his later years he went

further. He saw that there was no chance of any great advance in Ireland, either intellectual, industrial, or social, until the education system was reformed root and branch, and the people placed in control of it instead of the clergy. For the control of education, however, the clergy would fight as they never fought for aught else, and would fight as one man. With this in view, and bearing in mind the growing tendency of the clergy, especially in the higher ranks, to identify themselves with the English Garrison, to look for what they wanted to the English bureaucrats—in short, to take the place of the extinct landlordism as the chief unofficial bulwark of British rule in Ireland—with all this becoming daily more plain, it became plain also that particular attacks upon particularly obnoxious clerics would no longer meet the case. The moment had come for a New Departure. Just as the Land League had substituted for spasmodic attacks upon individual landlords a general attack upon landlordism, so now must an assault in force be made upon the whole fortress of clericalism. This was the campaign which Davitt was preparing at the time of his untimely death. This was the campaign which his genius and his prestige could have made a success in a comparatively brief space. This is the campaign which, orphaned as they are of their great leader, democratic Nationalists must pursue diligently, if they are to prove worthy of the name of followers of Michael Davitt.

That term "followers" suggests one last word of warning.

No one was more careful than Michael Davitt to insist on the importance of adhering to principles rather than to persons. The Irish tendency to hero-worship stands particularly in need of a corrective on this point. It was the worship of Parnell, against which Davitt always protested, that paved the way for the wreck which he wrought, that made it possible for him to drag down the National cause in his fall—a consequence which would have been impossible had the people understood the proper attitude to take up towards their leader. Davitt himself must not posthumously fall a victim to a similar misconception. There seems little danger of this to-day, it is true; the present position of Irish affairs is remarkable rather for the extent to which Davitt's ideals and personality have already been forgotten. But this book cannot omit the warning for the future without being false to Davitt's spirit. Movements which associate themselves too closely with the name of a departed hero are apt to grow conservative by dint of too close an adherence to the principles which once were regarded as the limit of progress; and thus it has more than once been the lamentable posthumous fate of a great reformer to become the eponymous hero of a reactionary party. To avoid any such catastrophe in the present instance, we must be careful to note that what is wanted is to proceed along Davitt's lines; not to stand still where he stood. For the moment, the programme of Davitt may adequately represent our highest aspirations.

But his influence must be constantly regarded as a living force. It is only the commonplace man who grows cold and conservative with age; the rare spirits who have made the world worth living in widen their outlook and strengthen their faith in progress year by year. Such was Davitt, and any party which aspires to work in his spirit cannot fittingly be otherwise. Not to imitate with punctilious exactitude his conduct in any given emergency, but to become imbued with the spirit of his career, and to apply that spirit to existing circumstances according to one's own judgment, is the task of the true Davittite. We may eventually be compelled to proceed far beyond Davitt's position; but however far we advance, if we remain faithful to the spirit to liberty, of truth, and of justice, we may be confident that we are following the lines marked out for the Irish people by Michael Davitt, the Father of the Land League.

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